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THE
JOURNEY OF LIFE.



BY
CATHERINE SINCLAIR,

Author of 'Beatrice,' 'Modern Accomplishments,' &c.

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By

CATHERINE SINCLAIR.



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JOURNEY OF LIFE.

BY
CATHERINE SINCLAIR.

"It was ever my object to search out why I came into the world, what I ought to do in it, and where I shall go."—*Lady Hester Stanhope.*

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

“ All, when summer suns are past,
Shelter seek from winter's blast.”

IT is with feelings of deep and almost sacred gratification, that the author acknowledges the favour of being called on for a second edition of this volume. She is enabled to look back with softened emotions of grief on the circumstances under which it was written, since others who need consolation as much as she did, — and still does, — find sources of comfort suggested in it, which enable them to be, even though sorrowful as to this world, yet rejoicing in the sure promise of a better.

Those who have travelled in foreign lands are wont to give accounts of what they have seen in the course of their travels; and, accordingly, it

became the desire of the author to offer to others the benefit of her own experience and reflections during the most interesting and important of all journeys, the "Journey of Life," through the rugged paths of this world, towards that country to which the heavy laden are invited, and where the weary traveller will find rest.

Those who go down to the sea in ships, and see the wonders of the deep, have their compass, and, by God's blessing, they arrive safely in port. To those who cross the sandy desert, some bright star is a sure and safe guide; and for man who toils along that road which leads to the country from whose bourne no traveller returns, seeking the path which few there are who find, there is a sacred Hand-book which, like the star in the east, will surely conduct him to that land of promise where there are many mansions prepared for the followers of Christ.

In her journey towards that far country, it has been the author's sacred, melancholy, and yet, most consolatory duty, to attend so many of her early Christian friends, and dearest relatives in

their last stage through life, that many readers may anticipate a deep shade of gloom in thoughts originated beside the silence and darkness of approaching dissolution ; but far otherwise has been her own experience of its effects, for she has witnessed only so calm, so solemn, and so trusting a confidence in the pardoning mercy of God, through Jesus Christ, that there was left for her but the heart-breaking resignation of every earthly hope, soothed by words of cheering consolation, from those whom now she must hear and see no more on earth.

Should this volume be instrumental in assisting others to welcome their final hour, with the same deep, solemn, heartfelt awe, and with the same grateful and unshrinking resignation, which the author has lately witnessed, in one who had more than ordinary ties to life, — such Christian fortitude is all she would ask for herself, or others ; and the reader may be assured that, in commending these thoughts to his consideration, it has been done with very fervent prayer, that in so far as the reflections are accordant with Divine Truth,

they may have the same animating effect on the minds of others, that in the depths of sudden anguish they had upon her own, leading her on, as they did, to the perfect conviction that affliction is not always a misfortune.

“Earth hath no sorrow which Heaven cannot cure.”

MILTON.

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JOURNEY OF LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

THE UNIVERSAL PREVALENCE OF AFFLICTION.

O Happiness! how far we flee
Thine own sweet paths in search of thee.

COWPER.

As the light of the sun creates every variety of colour visible in the aspect of nature, so also the light of religion gives apparent rise to a countless variety of opinions in society; but seeing that there are primitive hues in the rainbow, which cannot be altered by any vapours from the earth, so also there are incontrovertible and essential doctrines emanating from Holy Scripture, which no one professing Christianity could hesitate to recognise; and these only are to be considered in the following pages.

Universal opinion having long pronounced that the peculiar province, as well as the highest

privilege, of women is to give comfort in all the varied sorrows of life; it may not perhaps be considered presumptuous if one, taught in the school of deep and painful experience, should suggest for the use of others a few such reflections, sincerely felt and simply stated, as appear most to promise permanent consolation during the long and sometimes rugged journey of life, as well as at its mysterious and solemn termination.

Without presuming to infringe on the sacred office of "ambassadors from God" to this rebellious and suffering world, these pages are intended merely to imitate the easy and desultory nature of a conversation beside one who in any trial may require sympathy, or to be the companion of those who may read them in the same spirit in which they are written, when watching, night after night, in silence and sorrow, beside the pillow of a dying friend. On such an occasion, hand in hand with those about to leave us for ever, we seem to stand on the verge of both worlds, while every thing on this side of eternity fades for the time into its proper insignificance, and the Christian appears to die twice over, in gathering the last thoughts, and supporting the last sufferings, of those whose minds have been always hitherto one with his own.

As only one being ever existed on the earth without sin, and none without sorrow, words ad-

dressed to the afflicted must be, sooner or later, applicable to all; and yet in the familiarity of conversation at those times when the mind is as much in mourning as the dress, many thoughts may suggest themselves, inadequate to the dignity of the pulpit, though worthy to be engraven on the hearts of those who suffer, as a legitimate source of consolation. Every individual now living, or yet to be born, must endure much sorrow. If, therefore, a suitable manual could be provided for the many who now, or shall hereafter, require support and comfort, there could be no book, except the Bible itself, of more universal application and utility. It would be well indeed for us and for all, if the effectual application of the true antidote were as certain as the endurance of the wound which shall require it; so that, amidst affliction in its utmost depth, we should experience in their utmost power those bright and cheering anticipations of future felicity, to which, when "afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted," religion still benignly points our best and latest hope—

In still small accents whisp'ring from the ground
A grateful earnest of eternal peace.

In the general love of mankind during all ages for tragical representations, we see one evidence, among many, that there exists in the core of every

heart a root of melancholy, "the still sad music of humanity;" and truly is it affirmed that the superior part of our nature is the most connected with sadness, seeing that sorrow touches the finest chords of the mind. When did a sublime thought ever spring up in the soul in which some traces of that feeling may not be found, for it prevails the most in elevated natures, in those who "find the hoard of human bliss too small," and is in truth, whether recognised to be so or not, the aspiration of our fallen spirits after that pure and holy immortality for which man was originally formed, and to which the Christian is again speedily destined. Even an extreme of joy becomes so painful, that it finds a sufficient vent only in tears!

There is no music in the life
That sounds with idiot laughter solely;
There's not a string attun'd to mirth
But has its chord in melancholy. — HOOD.

A more general interest is felt in reading the memoirs of those men eminent for their Christian virtues than in any other species of biography, because, though all cannot hope to be heroes or statesmen, all feel as if they might be Christians; nevertheless, there are very strong and very just objections to the publishing of journals kept beside the death-bed of even the most enlightened and exemplary among mankind, because either the dying man should receive a candid intimation

that all he now whispers to his most confidential friend is about to be made nearly as public as if spoken on the platform at Exeter Hall; or if, unwarned by such a hint, he speak his whole thoughts, laying bare all the stings of conscience and of memory, much has to be suppressed which falsifies the picture of his mind, otherwise the result is an unjustifiable breach of the most sacred confidence,—a case in which, to say the best of it, friends do evil that good may come. It was the remark of Sir James Mackintosh, that “a life which is worth reading ought never to have been written.”

The difference in good taste and propriety between an ancient biography and a modern memoir is said to be as great as between a marble bust like those of the ancients and a modern wax figure like those now exhibited in a raree-show, and it was truly remarked of such unreserved publications, that they are a “new terror of death.” They also bring a new snare to the soul of a dying man, who becomes so occupied sometimes with the bustle and consequence of dying, that he almost forgets to think of death. As even the most abject criminals have to the last that prevailing desire of human applause which leaves man only with his latest breath, may not such a suspicion attach occasionally to the last hour of others, who “make the universe their confidant,” as Talley-

rand expressed, respecting the final scene of Mira-beau, "Il dramatisait sa mort."

If mere animals have all an instinctive wish to retire out of sight when they die, so does the modesty of human nature dictate a similar concealment from public observation. God alone can behold, with sufficient indulgence, the real imperfection of the very holiest Christian, and if those who faithfully examine themselves can scarcely endure the sight of their own mental deformities, how could the world be expected to take a favourable view, if the portrait be fully drawn, of an erring mortal in his final hour? It scarcely seems, therefore, an office of friendship or of good taste, to tear aside the curtain of privacy which naturally shrouds from public inspection the last closing scene of conflict and of trial that our frail perishing nature has to encounter, in the rending asunder of soul and body.

No eye undimmed by sorrow should rifle those very secret repositories of thought and feeling laid open at the end, during the agitations of fever, the struggles of natural affection, the depressions of an exhausted spirit, the admonitions of conscience, or the last faint glimmerings of reason on a death-bed. The dying Christian is enabled probably to struggle through the deepest floods of suffering, with the torch of his faith borne high above the reach of extinction, and

burning steadily on with increasing brightness to the last; but in such an hour of conflict and of suffering shall the failing eyes of a husband or father be turned on those he most loves and trusts, conscious that all his most agitated words are carefully recorded for the future inspection of a world of strangers? At such a moment should he not rather be calmed by the certainty that his friends will draw the veil of secrecy and sacredness over scenes of sorrow, suffering, and infirmity, with which strangers cannot sympathise and ought not to intermeddle? Those who read the too candid or too partial diary of mourning relatives rarely form a fair estimate of the Christian's real character. They cannot appreciate, by the last flickering light of the expiring lamp, how steadily his principles in past years may have shed a refulgent light on all around, nor how justly those who lived under his benignant influence may certify that he whose faith shone vividly, even to the utmost verge of existence before their eyes on earth, shall now, through Divine grace, enter at once on the unbounded regions of eternal day, and "shine as the stars for ever and ever."

It is, however, most desirable and important for all men to hear, unencumbered by the painful details of mental and bodily decay, the Christian's final verdict on life. To know, as in many in-

stances we do, that his soul did not recoil from its inevitable destiny ; and to be assured that, with a calmness, in some cases little short of sublime, he was enabled deliberately to testify, before the heart, the pen, and the tongue, were laid at rest, his own experience of religion, which he finds in death as in life all that was promised and all that his utmost hope anticipated, the sunshine of his existence when living, and the star lighting him along the valley of death itself, unerringly forward, to a brighter world beyond the grave.

In the old castle of Kelburne is to be seen a very interesting copy of the Holy Scriptures, which belonged more than a century since to the pious Earl of G * * *. At the end of each verse he has carefully signed his own name, which is thus inscribed many hundred times throughout the entire volume, at the close of which he has placed an inscription, to the best of my remembrance in these words, dated, in a handwriting evidently tremulous from weakness, a short time before his death :—“I hereby set my seal to the truth of every promise contained in the Gospel, having found them all realised throughout a long life, in my own happy experience.”

The good men do live after them in a way and at a time which they cannot foresee, and those who examine that ancient Bible, knowing how unspeakably it once was valued, and how

faithfully its pages once were studied, must be deeply and powerfully impressed by the deliberate testimony to its immeasurable worth of so devout and experienced a Christian, conscious of being on the verge of eternity, with his mind calm and clear as the ocean on a summer day, reflecting in its depths and on its surface the glorious light of Heaven.

When Dr. Harris, formerly head of Trinity College, Oxford, was about to expire, he calmly and deliberately addressed these words to the circle of his mourning friends around:—"All is nothing without a Saviour: without Him, my best works would condemn me. I am ashamed of them, they are so mixed with sin. I have done nothing for God as I ought. Loss of time lies very heavily on my spirit. Work—work apace. Assure yourselves, nothing will more trouble you when you come to die, than that you have done no more for God, who has done so much for you. It is hard for a saint to forgive himself some faults, when God hath forgiven them. I am now a great way home, near the shore; I leave you tossing on the sea. Oh, it is a good time to die in!" Thus do we perceive how the fruitful tree, when torn and shattered by the blast, scatters its fruit to all around, and sheds also the precious seeds which shall fructify in the ground after its own last hold on earth is gone.

It is pleasing to learn, from the last lines penned by Coleridge, in the immediate prospect of death, how clearly his great mind had conceived, and how thankfully accepted, the whole plan of our salvation, which is here so beautifully expressed by one whose powers of thought were transcendent, and whose grasp of natural intellect few have exceeded: —

The heir of Heaven, henceforth I fear not Death;
In Christ I live, in Christ I draw the breath
Of the true life: — Let then earth, sea, sky,
Make war against me! on my heart I show
Their mighty Master's seal. In vain they try
To end my life, that can but end its woe.
Is that a death-bed where a Christian lies?
Yes! but not his — 'tis Death itself there dies.

CHAP. II.

ON THE TRUE USE AND VALUE OF TIME.

If thus thy bounties gild the span
Of ruined earth and sinful man,
How glorious must the mansions be
Where thy redeemed shall dwell with thee!

HEBER.

As in a journey the chief interest arises from a miscellaneous variety of objects being presented to the sight—fields and groves, hills and dales, deserts and villages—not classed together or formally arranged, but unconnectedly scattered along the road-side; so, in considering the journey of life, no very rigid division of subjects nor logical exactness can be adhered to, where the topics are so various, so contrasted, and yet all bearing towards the same end.

Since we are to lead but one life upon the earth, and then leave this world never to return, how obviously it is our own interest, and that of every other individual, often to ask ourselves, during the progress of events, whether, in spending this one only mortal existence with which we have been intrusted, it is laid out to the utmost advan-

tage. For what purpose was it given to us— for what purpose are we using it; and do we secure as much well-grounded happiness now as possible, consistently with the hope of better things in that immortal life which is to follow?

Men are allowed a certain measure of time in order to trade with it for eternity—a mere fraction, like a grain of sand on the boundless desert,— and we should often take a wide range of thought into the past and the future, fully to consider whether we pursue with Christian disinterestedness and moderation the affairs of this world, viewing it as merely the porch or vestibule leading onwards to our really permanent abode, to that world where the virtues and affections which here we are permitted and enjoined to cultivate shall hereafter be, not mere useless ornaments to the character, but brought into their fullest and happiest exercise. There, before the actual presence of a real, almighty, and visible God, we are permitted to expect enjoyment without measure and without end, in familiar companionship with those whose conduct and motives, being previously refined and dignified by the holy influence of religion, have been transplanted into a scene of perfect felicity, where they shall be enabled, as they shone on earth, to shine more and more unto the perfect day in Heaven.

This world, with all its splendid pageantry, its

labour, and its enjoyment, is indeed a too engrossing scene of busy enterprise. If, amidst its conflicting attractions, however, we do not take ample time to prepare for our future destination; and if we still continue to postpone what we cannot but plan and wish, as our best wisdom, to do, all our acquisitions shall soon appear as unsubstantial as a spider's web; but it is the chartered privilege of Christians that, after living well, to die shall be their unspeakable gain. This earth has been compared to a life balloon floating in illimitable space, beneath the watchful eye of its Creator, and freighted with the beings he has placed on its surface, here to pass rapidly through the sorrows, the joys, and the duties of existence, in our transit towards eternity; but unless we cling to our hope in the Gospel, as the vessel in a tempest clings to its anchor, we must suffer an everlasting shipwreck.

Here every living man complains that time is short, though all seem burdened every day with more hours than they can well dispose of; and each individual tries some peculiar plan of his own by which he hopes to become happy. Strange, as well as most lamentably mistaken, are the schemes of enjoyment—all promise and no reality—resorted to by those who neglect the only pursuit that gives dignity to life, and who undervalue that inextinguishable faith by which

a Christian is carried on towards the felicity for which he was created.

“Shadows we are,” says Burke, “and shadows we pursue;” yet though all around combines to hide from our thoughts the awfulness of life, it is a solemn thing to have received the gift of existence, for our names once inscribed on the roll of living men, are inscribed there for ever. Before each individual on earth, however short-lived or insignificant,—before the child that breathes but an hour, as well as the man who survives for a century, the long sweep of eternity is stretched out, wherein those who have lived once must inevitably live for ever. While there seems no bounds to the desire of every individual after happiness, all are destined to pursue the phantom in vain, till they seek it in a pure and perfect form, according to the plan laid down by our Divine Creator, who best knows for what we are made, and how to satisfy the deep cravings of our immortal nature after peace here and glory hereafter.

Though mere men of pleasure, whose minds are flimsy and superficial, often pity a Christian for the trammels under which they believe him to labour, imagining that he performs daily a forced march of duty and of discipline without enjoyment or relaxation; yet he himself knows his own felicity. He feels as if, from the moment when religion first dawned on his benighted mind, a

new sun were kindled in the hemisphere of his life, showing him every object in a new and better light, as well as enabling him to follow, with growing ardour and satisfied anticipation, what is best worth pursuing.

Men of the world, among a thousand schemes of aggrandisement and felicity on earth, all think each other mistaken in the plan of life they adopt, and talk with admirable good sense of the blunders witnessed in every one else, being ready to exclaim, like the Duchess de la Ferté to Madame de Staël, “Je ne trouve que moi qui ait toujours raison !” While they thus forget to look at home, each votary of this world’s pursuits can wonder at his neighbour’s anxiety to secure the feathers they so eagerly chase, and they in turn wonder at him; for it is singular, though certain, that no living man, however miserable, would change existence with any other man, however fortunate. Who shall direct where all pretend to know? Admirable, indeed, is the life that every thinking man intends at some future time or other to lead, though it may probably never be even attempted, until his life at last goes out like a neglected fire.

Fancies and notions he pursues
Which ne’er had being but in thought
Each like the Grecian artist woos
The image he himself has wrought.

Most undoubtedly the highest wisdom is to be happy, and who can question that it is a duty also? If a friend invited us to his house and lavished around us a thousand resources for innocent enjoyment and useful occupation, would it not be a most ungracious and ungrateful return to reject them all with indifference or with moroseness? and in this world, which God has so beautifully adorned for man, we should search out what are intended to be our pleasures. It seems desirable, therefore, to ascertain indisputably who has succeeded best in becoming happy and also in continuing to enjoy the truest felicity; but as Adam was discontented even in Paradise, as Ahab was dissatisfied on his throne, and Haman, with all his promotion at court, still murmured, no gifts of this world can satisfy, without the Spirit of God to give peace in the enjoyment of them. Men attempting without the sanction of God and their own consciences to derive enjoyment from all the unbridled indulgences of selfishness and sensuality, are often the first afterwards to give evidence against themselves, how fatally they were deceived; an evidence which has been indelibly recorded in the history of many who became once conspicuous for the prostration of great wealth or great talents to the mere ephemeral pursuits and vulgar dissipations of this fleeting existence, as short-lived

and in itself insignificant, compared with eternity, as foam upon the ocean's wave.

How many who have lived in the pursuit of transient pleasure rather than of permanent happiness might, after such a life of strenuous idleness, mournfully apply to themselves the last words of Grotius—"I have lost my life in laboriously doing nothing!" The miserable lamentations of the licentious and talented infidel Chesterfield, a mere drudge of earthly pleasure, over the wretched inanity of a worldly and sensual life, may be considered one of the best sermons ever unintentionally preached against the inordinate love of this world, coming, as the sentiments do, from one of its most successful votaries. It should be read by every young man when first entering the school of fashion, as containing the long-gathered experience of a talented nobleman, who partook of all its choicest gratifications and received all its highest honours, but lived to look upon them like torn flowers scattered beneath his feet, and recorded these memorable words as the final result of his experience: "I have seen the silly rounds of business and pleasure, and have done with them all. I have enjoyed all the pleasures of the world, and consequently know their futility, and do not regret their loss. I appraise them at their real value, which is, in truth, very low: whereas those that have not experienced, always overrate them.

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They only see their gay outside, and are dazzled with the glare ; but I have been behind the scenes : I have seen all the coarse pullies and dirty ropes which exhibit and move the gaudy machine ; and I have seen and smelt the tallow candles, which illumine the whole decoration to the astonishment and admiration of an ignorant audience. When I reflect back upon what I have seen, what I have heard, and what I have done, I can hardly persuade myself that all that frivolous hurry, and bustle, and pleasure of the world, had any reality : but I look upon all that has passed as one of those romantic dreams which opium commonly occasions ; and I do by no means desire to repeat the nauseous dose for the sake of the fugitive dream. Shall I tell you that I bear this melancholy situation with that meritorious constancy and resignation which most people boast of ? No ; for I really cannot help it. I bear it — because I must bear it, whether I will or no. I think of nothing but of killing time the best way I can, now that he is become my enemy. It is my resolution to sleep in the carriage during the remainder of my journey.”

Almost equally sad and forlorn are the eloquent letters of Gibbon to Lord Sheffield, which betray in very striking colours, amidst withered joys and blasted hopes, the utter fallacy of his greatest literary glory, and his determination, to the last

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extremity, not to believe himself dying. His testimony, though adorned with every grace that genius or wit could suggest, amounts to no more than this—"I weep the more, because I weep in vain." "Man is so great," says Pascal, "that his grandeur appears from the knowledge he has of his own misery. A tree does not know that it is wretched. Thus all the misery of man proves his nobleness. It is the unhappiness of a great lord, the wretchedness of a dethroned king." It is not for the earth that we are born, and the utmost reach of mere human ambition, if limited to this world, can attain, in the end, to no more than the wish expressed by our bravest of heroes, Nelson; and afterwards in his own case, as to every particular, most remarkably realised, "Let me be crowned with laurel or covered with cypress, a coronet or Westminster Abbey."

No more, with fruitless care and cheated strife
Chase fleeting pleasure through the maze of life,
Finding the wretched all he here can have,
But present food and but a future grave.

A Christian alone appreciates the real greatness of his nature, and does due homage to the dignity of his own origin and destiny, when he knows that nothing can be of sufficient interest to an immortal mind that has not eternity for its ultimate object, and what Bonaparte said of clergymen in general should in some degree be

applicable to all Christians: "Les prêtres ne considèrent ce monde que comme une diligence pour conduire à l'autre."

All worldly men have periods of misgiving, when they doubt the worth of those pursuits to which their lives are, nevertheless, perseveringly devoted; and as the needle quivers on the compass and trembles till it be directly turned to its correct point, so does the soul of man vibrate uncertainly till it be settled towards its proper and everlasting destination. The most heedless have sometimes days of sorrow or alarm, during which the innermost centre of their minds is laid open to their own inspection, in a way which, under ordinary circumstances, never could have been done, and then the world for a time, with its external aspect of magnificence, its engrossing interests, its busy occupations, its ambition, and its glory, shrinks into its real insignificance. The miser feels at such times the worthlessness of gold, the ambitious man wearies occasionally of power, the votary of pleasure discovers the inanity of an existence devoted to mere amusement, the man of science looks despairingly at that boundless ocean of knowledge, where the greatest of sages, who had ransacked all the secrets of nature, declared that he could but pick up a few shells on the shore; and none are without an occasional misgiving that they are running round a ring

after knowledge and happiness which cannot be found.

—— they have sought

All save the wisdom with salvation fraught —
Won every wreath, but that which will not die,
Nor aught neglected, save eternity.

From the littleness of worldly concerns —
“their morals and their pleasures low,” — how
ennobling to retire sometimes into the greatness
of eternal things, regarding which, the same plain
promises are guaranteed to the most ignorant and
to the most learned, since none can deny that
science is vain and empty unless it improve the
life and purify the heart! The simple-minded
Christian of former days, “who knew nothing
but his Bible true,” had a better inheritance than
all the learning of Gibbon, the wit of Voltaire, or
the philosophy of Hume. The bubble breaks, and
'tis a double death.

When Pilate carelessly asked our blessed Lord,
“What is truth?” and did not wait for an answer,
he deserved none; but all who search diligently
for it in Holy Scripture shall there find the very
germ of truth adapted to the capacity of a child
or fitted to exercise the highest intellect of the
most profound philosopher, if he studied day and
night for a century.

The key to all sound knowledge and to all true
felicity is contained in the Bible, which ought to

be reverentially studied as the message of our Almighty Creator to the creatures he has formed; and as such it was estimated by a very eminent Christian, who was heard once to say, "If I have been honoured to do any good in my day; if I have been of any use to the Church, to my family, and to my fellow-creatures; if I have enjoyed any felicity in life—and I am happy to say I have had a large share—if I have any hope beyond the grave, and that hope I would not exchange for a thousand worlds—I owe all to the Bible." That sacred Volume is intended and fitted to teach bewildered man the whole mystery of existence and the whole art of happiness, to give him a spirit superior to pleasure, danger, or death, to be his best encouragement in every laudable pursuit, the support of his mind in difficulty, the soother of his spirit in adversity, the prop of his old age throughout increasing infirmity, and the very sunshine that sheds a glow of cheerfulness over the whole landscape of his existence. Who can sufficiently reverence that holy Book, which, as Locke remarks, has, "God for its Author, Salvation for its end, and Truth without any mixture of error for its matter;" which is intended to implant in our minds every elevated thought, to raise in our hearts every generous feeling, and to stamp on our souls the very image of that perfection which Christ came on earth to inculcate and to

exemplify? A curious dialogue took place once between two eminent men. Robertson, the historian, happening to remark, that, "if perfect Virtue were to descend to the earth clothed in human form, all the world would fall down and worship her." Dr. Erskine, his colleague, always alert in the assertion of Christian truth, replied, that perfect Virtue had, in the human nature of our Divine Saviour, appeared on the earth; but instead of being universally worshipped, the general outcry of his countrymen was, 'Crucify him, crucify him!'

Like our Redeemer himself, all God's brightest children in this world are trained in the school of affliction; yet those who really believe themselves going to the perfect felicity of heaven should certainly be able to cultivate a rejoicing spirit; and as a devout man prays for meekness, temperance, or other Christian graces, he should also pray for cheerful contentment. There may be clouds passing over the bright blue sky, yet the shadow they cast is but temporary; therefore who would peevishly fret at the momentary eclipse? The burning bush, though in flames, could not be consumed, because God was there; and though affliction be a fiery chariot, yet, if sent to carry our souls towards heaven, shall mortal man presume to complain? Let us rather so live that those around may not only hear but see how happy we

24 CHRISTIAN DILIGENCE RECOMMENDED.

are in the consciousness of God's forgiveness; let us recommend religion by our own demeanour, and let us avoid that gloomy, dissatisfied aspect assumed by some Christians, as if discontented with their Master's work and wages, or as if they had been appointed chief mourners for life. Very different was the conduct of our Divine Saviour, who entered into the innocent pleasures of nature as well as into its deepest sorrows, who set us the example of friendship and social intercourse, and whose first miracle was displayed on the occasion of that marriage feast at Cana, where "the conscious water saw its Lord and blushed."

So truly does the rule of Holy Scripture suit all the best interests of man, as well as insure his most genuine happiness, that if he had no higher aim than merely to advance his own temporal affairs, he could not follow a surer track than that prescribed for conducting the Christian to future felicity. To console himself in sorrow, what could be more cheering than the remembrance of having comforted others? No better means could be used than Christian diligence to increase his fortune, nothing is so infallible to gain honour as inflexible integrity. To acquire and preserve a good reputation, what could be more desirable than prudence, or as our Saviour himself recommends, to be "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves?" To maintain health, to

prolong life, or to give a true zest even to worldly pleasures, could there be a better receipt than Christian activity in duty, with Christian moderation and temperance? Such resources, once duly estimated, become more precious the longer they are enjoyed; they enliven us in society, they cheer us in solitude, they diminish the burdens of life, and disarm death of its terrors; those, therefore, who study any other guide to happiness in preference to the Bible have shut out the sun to read by a rushlight.

It was remarked once of Charles XII., that, having never learned arithmetic, he should be considered but half a man; yet how much more justly might so disparaging a verdict be applied to those who have never learned to know themselves, who live without looking resolutely into the depths of their own existence, and who have yet to learn the pleasures of devotion, of philanthropy, of a rightly stored memory, of a well directed imagination, and of an everlasting hope, all securely founded on love to God and man!

A human being, when first enlightened by the heartfelt desire of becoming truly Christian in knowledge, in conduct, and in devotion, feels as if awakened from a trance; amidst new pleasures and new interests he seems to discover, as it were, not only a new heaven, but already to enter on the enjoyment of a new earth. Then a

meaning is given to his existence and an object to all his actions; every motive and every wish becomes amended; past, present, and future being all gathered, like the centre of a wheel, into one great focus of union in that holy faith, around which all his thoughts and desires unceasingly revolve, till in eternity he at length attains the perfection of that happiness, which commences here from the time when the duties and pleasures of religion become paramount in his affections over every feeling of sorrow and trial.

When joy's bright sun has shed his evening ray,
And hope's delusive meteors cease to play;
When clouds on clouds the smiling prospect close.
Still through the gloom thy star serenely glows:
Like yon fair orb, she gilds the brow of night
With the mild magic of reflected light. — ROGERS.

CHAP. III.

THE NECESSITY OF LOOKING BEYOND THE PRESENT
HOUR TO AN ETERNAL FUTURITY.

People of the living God,
I have sought the world around,
Paths of sin and sorrow trod,
Peace and comfort nowhere found.

Now to you my spirit turns,
Turns, a fugitive unblest;
Brethren, where your altar burns,
O receive me into rest!

Lonely I no longer roam,
Like the cloud, the wind, the wave;
Where you dwell shall be my home,—
Where you die shall be my grave!

Hebrew Melody.

THERE are rules of perspective to be observed in life as well as in painting. A skilful artist gives to the faintest and most distant objects all their due prominence and solidity in a landscape, while we plainly see the real insignificance of the larger and more highly coloured masses in the foreground; and so does the Christian award to a remote futurity that dignity and importance in his estimation to which the trifles immediately around him have no claim.

The most difficult task in life, however, is to make the future predominate in our thoughts over the present, and to prefer invisible realities to visible shadows; for imagination incessantly paints an extreme of earthly happiness as almost within our grasp, which mortal man is never permitted to reach. The young naturally anticipate life as a holyday voyage on a cloudless morning, and expect to float along the tide of events, enjoying a state of consummate felicity which does not belong to the nature of man. Always anticipating more, they despise, in the mean while, the moderate portion of good, as it seems to them, now mingled in their cup, and thus extravagant hopes engender their own disappointment. Longer experience and more extended views bring a well-disciplined mind to the salutary conviction that all is vain and empty, except the two greatest pleasures of life, and those easiest of access, Religion and Christian friendship. The purest attachments of this world, however, bring with them sometimes the sting inseparable from all that is mortal, for death and change track our footsteps in the dearest associations of life. Often when the Christian could himself have borne with fortitude the weight of sorrow fallen unexpectedly on a once-happy home, he looks on the beloved countenances of those around who share in his calamity and weeps for them. When he sees faces that formerly

beamed with ceaseless vivacity now overclouded with grief — when he hears the voice, heretofore buoyant with glee, now saddened and low — when the eye that used to exchange looks of mirth with his own is mournfully averted, and when all the jests that in old times gladdened a cheerful fire-side are exchanged for tears — when the name, too, once first and dearest in the prayers of an assembled household, must at length be omitted — then indeed, do we begin to feel that our hearts are growing old.

Thus the sympathising mourn often for others, and the most selfish cannot escape having much to endure in themselves. The relish of life in youth is high, while joy is a gift of nature, and before sorrow interrupts its current; yet all are soon made to find and to feel the more sober reality, and it is well for a Christian not to shrink from witnessing the progress of events, whatever they be, knowing that each is gradually producing the development of God's will in respect to himself and all in whom He is interested. With the whole circle of his friends and relatives, as well as in his own most private thoughts, the Christian should endeavour to unite in a spirit of unquestioning submission and of deep tranquillity, derived from a source which no earthly vicissitude can reach. He lives in a continual consciousness that the whole tale of our lives is planned by an All-power-

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ful God, whose dispensations, however mysterious, are not only conducive, but essential to the welfare of his children. The happiest existence here is in truth no better than a cold and gloomy fog contrasted with the perpetual sunshine to follow in a world where, emancipated from every care and sorrow, the Christian shall learn as fervently to thank God that on earth he was permitted to die, as that he was permitted to live.

Few have left a stronger testimony than the late Earl of Erroll, how truly the heart of a Christian is raised above the things of earth and his affections fixed on things above. In the prime of his manhood, and distinguished at Court as one of the handsomest and most popular noblemen of the present day, he found himself suddenly brought to the brink of the grave, and during a long illness exhibited a degree of well-founded peace and hope most consoling to all around. "If you knew," he said, "how I loathe sin; how I loathe the recollection of the scenes of sin I have passed through, although almost all trace of them has passed away. If my life should be spared, I hope to prove the sincerity of what I now say." To Sir David Davies he said, "This is death; but I assure you I would not exchange what I now feel with any human being." When told that his pulse had become stronger, he answered, "Oh, do not say it, I so long for the regions of brightness." He said he would not

leave his sick and dying bed for the condition of all those in prosperity in the world, and desired two favourite books of devotion to be placed by his two dearest friends in his coffin.

To view the certainty of death with aversion and awe is an instinct of our nature implanted for very important purposes, which is often most keenly felt by men of the strongest sensibility and intellect; for the greater the vitality of mind and heart, the more intensely does that love of life prevail. Who ever endured greater mental suffering on that account than the admirable moralist Johnson? This tendency, during the vigour of life, health, and hope, is seldom entirely conquered, nor is there then any occasion that it should be; yet those only can be considered securely happy on earth whose minds are fortified against every emergency, not by closing their eyes to coming events, but by resolutely contemplating the future in such a spirit as was testified by the late celebrated Robert Hall. In his last hours, when Mrs. Hall expressed an earnest desire for his recovery, he calmly said, "Let us hope the best, and prepare for the worst. I have not one anxious thought either for life or death."

The "when" and the "how," both hidden from mortal knowledge, should often be the subject of our deliberate and serious anticipation, because

the more death becomes familiar to our thoughts and to our prayers the less formidable is its approach. The Indian, by frequent practice, learns fearlessly to wind a serpent round his neck, which an unaccustomed observer would be terrified to touch; and nothing is so appalling to the human mind as any mysterious danger which we dare not look into or cannot understand. To converse much with thoughtful and confidential friends, as well as to converse with our own minds, on the progress and prospects of life, not forgetting its unavoidable termination, diminishes every apprehension, and fortifies us for every change, so that the well-prepared Christian shall never have to make so sad a confession as that of Cæsar Borgia, Duke of Romania, in his last hours, "I had provided in the course of my life for every thing except death!"

How soon the little world of our affections and feelings appears to begin falling in fragments around us! Before we have lived above a few years, the sight of many a vacant chair at the old fire-side fills our hearts with a sorrow for which there is in this world one only consolation, namely, the hope that in a life to come the divided circle of once united and happy friends shall meet before God to part no more. The stroke which at length ends our own sorrows shall restore us to all those we have loved and lost; but the young, while

young, never can know the full meaning of that word farewell. In advancing years we say it often for the last time to those we love—we say it expecting only a short separation, perhaps, but find it was for ever; and then the whole meaning is understood and felt. It is a word belonging, in its depth and sadness, only to this world, for in another and a better it shall be heard no more.

Though we do wrong to sink entirely under the weight of affliction, nevertheless it is a duty to feel sorrow, for we are told “not to despise the chastening of the Lord, nor to faint when we are rebuked of him.” Some people are said to bear their bereavements “wonderfully!” but in respect to the loss of friends or other sorrows of sentiment and sympathy, it is quite possible to be too wonderful, while at the same time we cannot bear with too much hardihood the pains or privations personal to ourselves alone. Had the judgment of Brutus involved the amputation of his own limbs as well as the loss of his sons, it would have been more unquestionably magnanimous.

During extreme grief, the most soothing remedy is to converse with survivors; while it becomes the chief privilege of friendship to bestow and to receive consolation. Few, nevertheless, know how to administer it, seeing that affliction is so easy to talk of, and so difficult to bear. The most that can be said by the generality of people

on such an occasion seems, to those who have never known sorrow, or to those long recovered from the first bitterness of grief, amply sufficient; but the heart in its earliest outburst of agony rejects all ordinary comfort. When every refreshing spring is dried up and scorched like a stream in the summer's drought, the mind naturally loathes every suggestion that might diminish its torment. Those only can speak a language to be fully understood who have endured like ourselves; and it is that brotherhood in suffering which constitutes the greatest encouragement to each sorrowing supplicant when appealing to our Divine Saviour for sympathy and compassion —

In ev'ry pang that rends the heart
The Man of Sorrows had a part.

As the great end of our being brought into this world is that we may become happy in the next, it might be supposed that no subject could be half so interesting as to notice every step by which our unerring Guide conducts us safely to the final close of this probationary existence. He leads us gradually, but certainly, onwards, by ways we knew not, and by events we little anticipated, towards that glorious consummation which God has pledged his promise that the Christian shall ultimately attain, and the prospect of which may reconcile our minds unflinchingly to every vicissitude.

Respecting our hopes in futurity, there are not now many Gallios who care for none of these things; but, in our supplications to God, Christians must not mutilate the prayer of our blessed Saviour in the garden, saying, with the whole fervour of their hearts, "Let this cup pass from me," while the spirit is wanting in which the Redeemer added, "yet not my will but thine be done." To his followers, the cup of affliction is always mingled with some ingredient of mercy, but to our Divine Mediator himself in that hour there was only unmitigated woe. The entire weight of human calamity was cast upon his spirit at once, in the form and degree most difficult to bear: — the treachery of friends, the loneliness of sorrow, the ignominy of a public death, and the withdrawal of his Father's countenance, all aggravated by every accompaniment most agonising to nature.

Christ bore the sins of the whole world; and the greatest misery of mortal man — the curse of life and the sting of death — is sin. To every human being endowed with right feeling and sound reason, the polluting consciousness of his own individual guilt is the bitterest pang which attends our dying moments; but even that is alleviated by the consciousness that though the sin is ours, the punishment is intercepted by One who was willing to bear it for us.

The perfection of knowledge is to know God and ourselves; to acquire which is, therefore, the highest attainment of Christian wisdom, and can only be gained by the teaching of that Holy Spirit who is the Fountain of all instruction. Nothing makes so great a difference between individual Christians as a habit of calm and serious reflection, while those only who have experienced the difficulty can appreciate how great and energetic a struggle is requisite not to remain strangers always to our own souls, and to the real motives by which our apparently best actions are dictated. While daily acquiring more depth in the knowledge of this world, we may at last be found to know every thing but that which it chiefly concerns us to know. We may dedicate our minds to the interesting and instructive study of history, yet it merely tells us the past experience and actions of other men — “To fix a hero’s birthday or descent.” We may contemplate the wonderful structure of plants without perhaps a thought of the hand that formed them, or we may enlarge our comprehension by inquiring into the majestic wonders of astronomy; but it matters comparatively little to understand or admire the starry firmament, if still, while years are striding on, our hearts remain grovelling on the earth. Aristotle, we are told, for the great love he bore to knowledge, held that the chief happiness of man consisted in contem-

plation : and if he found so much joy in making discoveries about natural objects, what shall not we find in making further discoveries of the works and goodness of the Almighty, and in the clear vision of Himself ?

To become thoroughly imbued with the wisdom belonging to eternity is what elevates the soul to creation's highest level, by giving nobleness of purpose, greatness of mind, and calm steadiness of intention, all resting on a foundation perfectly secure in the revealed mercy of God to man. As in this life, however, it is decreed that "all things are full of labour," these can only be acquired at a cost of self-denial and exertion proportioned to their worth, and such efforts are especially requisite in those who would testify the sincerity of their faith by the holiness of their works.

Religion is a long and difficult art; consequently, those who do little, and sacrifice nothing for God, while their piety consists in mere occasional impulses, are but feathers on the stream. Their souls may be unsettled or shaken by every eddy of caprice or temptation, and the words of Jacob to Reuben become in their case most sadly appropriate,—"Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel." No man becomes a saint in his sleep; and we might as well determine to be learned without ever reading, to acquire an estate without ex-

ertion, to be healthy without exercise, or safe without guarding against danger, as to become religious without using the means appointed for becoming so. By fervent, earnest, and habitual prayer, the most difficult of all tasks to those who have not practised it, and the most delightful of duties to those who have, we are told to seek the assistance of God's Holy Spirit, as the only sure Director for our blinded consciences, and erring inclinations. We might as well expect to live under water as to keep our souls alive without prayer; but by means of such guidance, we shall be taught to live as circumspectly as if our salvation depended on each action of our lives, and to feel that the eye of God is as continually present with us as the light of day; yet the more conscientiously we endeavour to fulfil our duty, the more shall we become aware how impossible it is so much as to think a good thought without assistance from on high. The best and holiest of Christians would but hold a taper to the sun, if he expected by any merit of his own to deserve that salvation purchased for man by the propitiation of Christ, and the whole cost of which was paid in that moment when He said, "It is finished." Then the gate of mercy flew open, and a free admission has ever since been offered to all who come, weary of sin and heavy-laden with sorrow, to their benignant Saviour for rest.

Since the only hope of man for eternity rests, then, on Christ our Redeemer, we must be willing, as his followers, to suffer much; for who can expect, or should even wish, to reach heaven on any other road than that by which the Son of God returned there, thorny and rugged, though from his birth to his crucifixion it was

— all heaven in tears above,
Earth unconcern'd below ?

As Robert Hall remarked during his own last struggles, and truly agonising they were—"A contemplation of the sufferings of Christ is the best antidote against impatience under any troubles; we should therefore reflect much on this subject, when in pain, in distress, or in expectation of death."

Men may teach astronomy without the sun, but not religion without the Cross of Christ; and a distinguished author in the English Church, wishing to express the infinite worth of our blessed Saviour's intercession, has recorded his opinion in these words:—"Had I all the faith of the patriarchs, all the zeal of the prophets, all the good works of the apostles, all the sufferings of the martyrs, and all the glowing devotion of the seraphs, I would renounce the whole in point of dependence, and glory only in the atoning blood

40 LOOKING TO AN ETERNAL FUTURITY.

and justifying righteousness of Jesus Christ my
Lord."

Bound upon the accursed tree,
Dread and awful, who is he ? —
By the prayer for those that slew,
" Lord ! they know not what they do !"
By the spoil'd and empty grave,
By the souls he died to save,
By the conquest he hath won,
By the saints before his throne,
By the rainbow round his brow —
Son of God ! 'tis thou ! 'tis thou ! — **MILMAN.**

CHAP. IV

THE REAL BENEFIT OF AFFLICTION.

From darkness here, and dreariness,
We ask not full repose,
Only be thou at hand to bless
Our trial hour of woes.

Is not the pilgrim's toil o'erpaid
By the clear rill and palmy shade?
And see we not, up earth's dark glade,
The gate of heaven unclosed? — KEBLE.

It may be generally said of a book as of wine, that the older it is the better, and few can excite more interest than the *Meditations of St. Augustine*. To be brought in contact so very close and confidential with the most secret thoughts of one who lived in retirement and meditation so many centuries ago is indeed strange and pleasing, especially when the reader discovers in the mind of that early Christian a mirror which reflects his own. A long vista of generations divides us from the period of his life and death, yet we know all he felt, all he believed, all he suffered, and all he did. We read with pleasing sympathy in how many respects he resembled those we love and

reverence around us now, and reflect with a deep impression of awe that, though centuries have elapsed since he vanished from the scenes of this world, he still exists and shall continue to exist throughout an eternity of years to come. The same sentiments which animated the pious and enlightened mind of St. Augustine have glowed in the hearts of all successive Christians who lived and died since he did, and the discipline to which religion summons us is the same which has conducted the devout of all intermediate ages into their Master's joy.

We change the fashions, the habits, the amusements, and the pleasures of this world every year, but its eternal duties and interests remain always the same. When St. Augustine mournfully laments his vitiated palate, which cannot rightly taste the enjoyments of religion, and complains that the mists of vanity blind his eyes to its truths, he uses language and expresses feelings equally suited to every Christian in the present hour. Other books may be read to-day and forgotten, like the toys of an hour, to-morrow, for the fashion of them passes away, but those which thus treat of devotion gain an added value by their antiquity, especially if we know for certain, as in the case of St. Augustine, that the author died, as well as lived, in conformity to all he taught.

Religion being intended to diminish every sorrow in life, also redoubles every joy, by giving to the Christian a feeling of security and protection in both. Those who pursue happiness only amidst the frivolities of life must not complain if, among the claims, the urgencies, and whirl, of this agitated world, they cannot find peace. Why do men persevere in looking for grapes on thorns, and for figs on thistles, when the tree of life shall be known by its fruits of assured felicity here, and unfading hope hereafter?

—— Who sought it else,
Sought mellow grapes beneath the icy pole,
Sought blooming roses on the cheek of death,
Sought substance in a world of fleeting shades.

POLLOK.

If our present state were one brilliant succession of enjoyments, few would ever willingly think of the end; but we are taught by frequent sorrow to take the pleasures of this world as the disciples plucked the ears of corn, only while hastening onwards to overtake their Divine Master. Thus the Christian, though he would by no means neglect or undervalue the embellishments that adorn his path, contemplates them with but transient interest, as sources only of temporary ornament and relaxation, not intended to delay his progress, but to refresh him by the way. The pleasures of intellect, of memory, and

of home, are all given as the decorations, but not as the business, of existence ; and great as is the enjoyment to be derived from each, or all of these, they are inseparably connected with trials and sorrows, to which every living mortal in every earthly indulgence is subject. Such drawbacks on even the nobler pleasures of life are most felt by those of the finest natures ; nor could any one envy a disposition so callous as not to suffer from the thorns of life, as he would also inevitably lose many of its most exquisite pleasures.

Dearly bought the hidden treasure
Finer feelings can bestow ;
Chords that vibrate sweetest pleasure
Thrill the deepest notes of woe.

As none, however thoughtless, may hope to pass through life without being plunged into scenes of deep affliction, it is well to fortify our minds with the consciousness that there are indeed joys, as well as griefs, peculiar to the forgiven Christian, which enable him, literally, to be, in the language of Divine inspiration, though "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." His mind continues at peace to life's utmost verge, as testified by frequent instances of almost daily occurrence. A dying Christian once, when about to close his exemplary life, said, "I want but death to complete my happiness ;" and the last hours of John Knox afford one instance among thousands how

mere human strength may fast decay, but the mind be strengthened with growing ardour and brightness. Till his dying breath, he seemed to find every text of Holy Scripture like a sunbeam, lighting him forwards in the dark valley of suffering; and when the 17th chapter of St. John was read, in his final hour, to him, he desired to hear it again three times over. His attention seemed earnestly fixed on those sacred, well-known words, until a moment before the mysterious link between soul and body was broken. When the friend, who prayed beside his pillow, asked whether he still could hear, his last words were these: "Would to God that you had heard with such an ear and heart as I have done! Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" Saying which, without any motion, as one falling asleep rather than dying, he, "who never feared the face of man," departed to enjoy the fruition of those promises and hopes, in listening to which he expired.

Thus our hearts, though stout and brave,
Yet like muffled drums are beating
Funeral marches to the grave.

The greatest event which ever took place on earth was the death of our Saviour, and on that most solemn occasion He left us an example for our imitation and encouragement. Almost every word uttered by Jesus Christ, during that awful

scene, was prayer; and in reverential imitation of him we should, when arrested by death, have immediate recourse to supplication, as our only safe refuge, a plank to which we may confidently cling in the shipwreck of our earthly existence. During that hour of utmost extremity not a doubt should rest on our minds, that to earnest, urgent, repeated intercession, from the inmost recesses of the soul, for ourselves and others, an answer in peace will be granted, such peace as thousands, amidst the brightest prosperities of life, have gone out of this world without ever having known.

A pleasing Christian custom long existed in the ancient Church, which the Russians still maintain. In every city or village throughout that empire, on Easter-day, friends all meet with these words of salutation "Christ is risen!" This habit has been preserved from primitive times, keeping up the grateful remembrance of an event which is much more than a mere historical fact, being the good news on which, in truth, every mortal must depend for peace here and happiness hereafter. God gave but six days to the creation of the whole world, but He was 4000 years preparing for its redemption. What Christian therefore can sufficiently measure its vast and unbounded importance to himself individually, though that which we cannot fully comprehend may,

nevertheless, be gratefully enjoyed, as the traveller, without measuring the whole extent of a landscape, may yet appreciate much of its grandeur and beauty. When the Jews observed Christ shed tears for the death of Lazarus, they at once exclaimed, "See how he loved him!" but now that He has shed his blood for us, how much more deeply should we estimate his love and his astonishing mercy. It is our cold ingratitude towards so inestimable a Benefactor which will dwell hereafter on the sinner's mind, with one eternal pang of remorse and amazement.

To comprehend, in any degree, the perfection of Christ's character and works requires such deep and serious meditation on every particular of his admirable life, that we shall only arrive fully at the comprehension of its excellence when heaven is our home, and the Divine Saviour revealed there visibly to our sight. Who then can hope successfully to imitate so perfect a model; and yet all are desired to attempt the task, which seems, the more we study our great Original, the more sublime and unattainably holy. Pure and disinterested in motive, the love of Christ had for its only end the happiness of those who were his ungrateful enemies; and in the whole history of man's redemption, the part most wonderful to contemplate is the character of Christ in his sinless but real human nature, so abounding in

dignity, in benevolence, in self-command, and in forbearance. His conduct, when understood, seems the greatest of miracles; and his mission, so full of mercy and condescension, is the most difficult to fathom of all the deep mysteries now in part revealed to mankind. His greatness, like his peace, "passeth all understanding:" and how well is that glory and goodness expressed in the opening words used at the service on Good Friday in the Greek Church, "He who hung the heavens and the earth in their spheres, hangs to-day on the accursed tree!"

Man was at first, we know, perfectly free from sin, and consequently exempt from suffering, born to uninterrupted health and prosperity in both soul and body. After he became tainted with guilt, however, and lost the sceptre of self-government, it was, we are assured, the merciful purpose of our Creator still to adopt, among the children of men, a chosen few, who, raised above the little weaknesses and petty disappointments of a mere worldly career, should live up to the superior capacities with which our nature is endowed, — who, amidst the dearest affections with which life is embellished, and the purest enjoyments by which it can be adorned, should still belong, in a peculiar manner, to himself, whose character, like a gradually opening flower, should unfold by degrees into perfection—who should follow through

evil report and good report in the footsteps of Christ, reach steadily forward to the high destiny for which they are formed, be made perfect through much suffering, and when properly disciplined, be delivered at last from all the difficulties of faith, from all the waverings of hope, and welcomed into an eternal home. There the long-separated group shall be united in one blessed abode, where the happiness is unbounded in extent, unlimited in duration, and is glorified by the presence of that great and awful God, whose frown is hell, whose smile is heaven.

'Tis paradise if thou be there,
If thou depart 'tis hell.

As the blossom of spring and the pride of summer decay, so does the life of man; for is it not as certain that we shall die as that we have been born? The irreversible sentence of our Creator is, that each living man must hereafter take his solitary way from the mortal to the immortal state, and pass the gulf dividing earth from heaven, without that companionship and sympathy of friends which accompany us through all the other events of our worldly career. The last awful step must be made alone. We may be surrounded by weeping relatives, whose gentle hands are busied in smoothing the pillow of suffering, and whose ears are intensely bent on

catching our latest accents. They seem ready almost to enter the very grave itself with us, and yet we must go alone. The solitude of death would be unbroken were it not that the stroke which severs us from earthly friends brings us into the presence of Christ our Saviour. Mortal forms shall be seen no more, and mortal voices heard no more, when our lonely bark is launched in tempest and darkness, on the shoreless ocean; but inevitable as is the destruction of every earthly tie, the Christian feels confident that he suffers no actual loss of existence. His Saviour is invisibly present till his final hour in this world, and becomes visibly disclosed to him in another for ever. Then the wicked, however powerful, shall cease from troubling; and then the weary, whatever their sorrows, shall be at rest.

Well is it for those who can say with their last breath as the pious Fuller did:—"My hope is such, that I am not afraid to plunge into eternity." In the long inventory of a Christian's blessings, it is promised that "to die shall be gain," and in this belief let us be ready to adopt the language of a venerable clergyman, who looked around for the last time on his mourning friends, and said, in pity for their extreme sorrow, "Why should any of you be so sad, when I am so very happy? This—this is the hour that I have waited for."

Since, then, we are not only born alone, but must die alone, why should so much of our intermediate time be spent in avoiding to remain alone with our own thoughts? They are undoubtedly the best school in which to study ourselves while seeking more and more insight into the solemn mystery of our origin and destiny; some serious reflection on which, though frequently sad, must always be salutary, and often ends in cheerfulness, though it commence in sorrow.

Religion does not sanction the visionary and useless solitude of the cloister or the desert, where men retire from the social and domestic ties in which God has appointed their duty, as well as their natural happiness; and the attempt to substitute any other obligations for which, is but a presumptuous interference with the law of nature and of God. The first blessing given to man by his Maker was domestic society; and those who relinquish the moderate enjoyment of friendly intercourse generally take to "Graver follies, but as empty quite." Religion, instead of withdrawing us from the active occupations of life, instructs us how to discharge them; how to practise social life here, preparatory to a world of social enjoyment hereafter. Religion "knows nothing of the recluse. It has not a word of encouragement for the virtue of the monastery. 'Wisdom crieth without; she crieth in the chief place of con-

course ; in the city she uttereth her words ; that is to say, the busiest sphere of the world is the busiest sphere of religion. A man who retires into inactive solitude, not only runs from the field in the heat of the conflict ; but, as far as his secular obligations are concerned, he voluntarily incurs a civil death, and, as far as his religious obligations to others are concerned, he is chargeable with a moral suicide."—HARRIS.

It might be taken as a curious emblem how perfectly the purity of a superior nature may be preserved in the most contaminating contact, to inspect a colony of beautiful gold fish, which are bred in multitudes, and reared in all their native beauty, beneath a pool of the foulest and most noxious water that can be imagined, near the town of Leeds, where, in defiance of the rankest scum and vapours, the gay and beautiful little community may daily be seen, far more bright and far more happy, than in the melancholy glass goblets in which they occasionally ornament a drawing-room, and in which their lives are as dull, and almost as unnatural, as that of a recluse in a cloister.

The social duties of relationship among Christians nothing can supersede, for they are divinely appointed. The soldier might as well remain alone in his tent, while his comrades are disciplined for action, and expect to be equal to them in the day of victory, as the Christian who has shunned

the discipline of life and avoided difficulties instead of conquering them, to fight the good fight of faith, with the skill and strength belonging to a practised soldier and servant of our great Master, whose prayer for his disciples was, not that they should be taken out of the world, but kept from the evil of it.

Our kindness, as well as our society, is the birthright of those with whom God has connected us; and we cannot, with justice, disinherit them of our affection and good offices. The less congenial with himself in point of temper, habits, or pursuits a man's relatives are, the greater proof it is of conformity to God's will if he persevere in praying for them, and in aiming to serve them effectually. They are, for some wise reason, selected to be inalienably our associates; and it may be said of parents and children, of brothers and sisters, as decidedly as of husband and wife, that those whom God hath joined nothing should put asunder.

The truest criterion of a man's character and conduct is invariably to be found in the opinion of his own nearest relations, who, having daily and hourly opportunities to judge him, will not fail to do so. It is a far higher testimony to his excellence if he attain the esteem and good-will of one or two individuals within the privacy of his own home, than of hundreds in his nearest neighbour-

hood, or of ten times the number residing at a distance. In fact, next to a prayerful self-examination, no scrutiny on earth comes so near the truth as for a man to ask himself what is thought of him by the familiar circle of his own fire-side, and he who has no such familiar circle of those who love and know him thoroughly, is either much to be pitied or very much to be blamed.

When the man so miraculously cured at Decapolis expressed his anxious wish to follow our Lord, he was desired, on the contrary, to return home, and there tell what God had done for him; the disciple Andrew as soon as he had discovered the Messiah first findeth his own brother Simon Peter, and brought him also to Jesus; Noah would have felt it but a sad and lonely deliverance, had he been ordered to enter the ark alone; and Christ himself, though for a time he retired into the mountain solitude, soon returned to society, where he showed a perfect pattern of friendship, teaching us not only what we may hereafter be in heaven, but also what we should now be on earth. Those who neglect to promote the happiness, or to seek the salvation of any with whom the providence of an all-wise Creator has connected them by the most sacred ties, betray one of their chief trusts, and lose one of the greatest felicities which this world can offer.

It was the remark of a disappointed man, who had squandered all his time in general company,

and in any house rather than his own, that "society consists of people combining to counterfeit happiness;" but he might safely have added, had the experiment ever been tried by him, that the reality may be best enjoyed within a well-constituted home founded on religious principle, and embellished by domestic affection. In such a home a Christian finds the very metropolis of his felicity: and there should the brightest evidence be seen of that elevated mind and self-denying spirit which ought to appear on all occasions, great or small, public or private, as the badge of his high profession.

If we are not doing good in our own sphere we must inevitably be doing harm, as no man can squander his own time without defrauding others. Each has a charge from God, which cannot be neglected without injuring his neighbours as well as himself. They are born with a right to our good offices; no man is entitled to live for himself alone; and all are responsible stewards, not merely of their money, but what is much more precious, and never to be recalled if we misuse them, our time and our talents.

The most hopeless state of unhappiness falls to the lot of those who endeavour to reconcile a worldly and sensual life with religion; for such an attempt causes the loss of both, as it prevents the thorough enjoyment of either. The real

treasures of human life when sanctified to God, are books, friendship, and the love of nature; or, according to the poet's moderate wishes, "A small house and a large garden, few friends and plenty of books." An accomplished and most judicious author, Mrs. Grant of Laggan, gives her advice to women, that they should cultivate "peace, friendship, and needle-work"—advice which she found her own happiness in following: but Madame de Stael, the idol of worldly fame and of worldly society, had found so little real permanent happiness in either company or celebrity, that, wearied of both, she said in her last hours, though no hope unfortunately was expressed beyond those scenes in which she had been so conspicuous and admired, "I leave life without regret." Goëthe also, one of the most prosperous and self-indulgent of philosophers, declared that life had been to him only weariness and annoyance, "the eternal rolling of the stone."

Lighter than air, Hope's summer visions fly,
 If but a fleeting cloud obscure the sky;
 If but a beam of sober reason play,
 Lo, Fancy's fairy frost-work melts away!
 But can the wiles of Art, the grasp of Power,
 Snatch the rich relics of a well-spent hour?
 These, when the trembling Spirit wings her flight,
 Pour round her path a stream of living light,
 And gild those pure and perfect realms of rest,
 Where Virtue triumphs, and her sons are blest.

ROGERS.

CHAP. V.

THIS WORLD IS, AND OUGHT TO BE, AN UNSATISFYING
PORTION.

Think we, or think we not, Time hurries on
With a resistless, unremitting stream,
Yet treads more soft than e'er did midnight thief
That slides his hand under the miser's pillow,
And carries off his prize. — BLAIR.

THE only happiness that leaves no shadow behind is derived from religion; the bright unfading colours of which are dipped in heaven itself; but they who remain careless of those deep wants in our nature which only God can satisfy, rest their hopes on mere worldly prosperities, and feel often a lassitude which is, in fact, a weariness of themselves, some tormenting discontent at what they are, or some unavailing struggle to acquire what God has not chosen that they ever shall reach. This last dying advice was given by an old lady of 90, to a young friend, who had expressed surprise at her unceasing cheerfulness: — “If there be any object on earth that, in the progress of life, you have set your

heart upon and cannot gain, just throw it behind you, and never look back !”

No instance on record more strikingly exemplifies how vain is every worldly resource, and how sure to fail in the hour of utmost need, than the written testimony of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. Gifted with wit, beauty, rank, fortune, and the most distinguished place in society, no woman ever enjoyed a longer reign of admiration, first for her personal charms, and afterwards for her mental brilliancy. Devoted, without a single restraint, to all the fascinations of refined company, literary friendships, and continental amusements, the only pleasures she never appreciated, or even tried, were those of religion and of domestic affection. After a life of unlimited self-indulgence like hers, the world might perhaps have anticipated a more favourable verdict on its pleasures than is contained in the last lines from her gifted pen, which seem to have been written in a state of almost suicidal melancholy, and at a time when her mind was tossed like a rudderless bark on a dark and stormy sea. The verses are addressed to the Countess of Pomfret; and on being read at that time by the pious and most exemplary Lady Hertford, she feelingly said, “ If I had been near Lady Mary then, I should have persuaded her to examine the New Testament, in hopes that a Bible might

afford her the conviction which she had sought in vain from Tully and other authors. If she would read the Scriptures with the same attention and impartiality that she does any other books of knowledge, they would disperse a thousand mists, which, without such assistance, will too certainly hang upon the finest understanding."

LINES BY LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU, IN 1736.

With toilsome steps I pass through life's dull road,
No pack-horse half so wearied of his load;
And when this dirty journey shall conclude,
To what new realms is then my way pursued?
Say, then, does the unbodied spirit fly
To happier climes, and to a better sky?
Or, sinking, mixes with its kindred clay,
And sleeps a whole eternity away?
Or shall this form be once again renew'd,
With all its frailties, all its hopes, endued,
Acting once more on this detested stage,
Passions of youth, infirmities of age?
I see in Tully what the ancients thought,
And read, unprejudiced, what moderns taught,
But no conviction from my reading springs—
Most dubious on the most important things;
Yet one short moment would at once explain
What all philosophy has sought in vain,
Would clear all doubts, and terminate all pain,
Why, then, not hasten that decisive hour,
Still in my view, and ever in my power?
Why should I drag along the life I hate,
Without one thought to mitigate the weight?

Whence this mysterious bearing to exist,
When every joy is lost, and every hope dismiss'd?
In chains and darkness wherefore should I stay?
And mourn in prison whilst I keep the key!

These lines contain a dismal picture; but baffled nature showers her gifts in vain on those who take even the brightest and best for their all; and as each man must, like the snail, carry his own burden, it is as overwhelming when made up of trifles as of heavier weights. Those who consider religion to be a source of melancholy could find nothing in the writings of any Christian to match the sadness of Lady Mary's evidence. That eminent and pious philosopher Locke, who justly estimated the grandeur and the vanity of our existence here, said on the night preceding his death, "I have lived long enough, and am thankful to have enjoyed a happy life; yet, after all, I look upon this life to be nothing but vanity, which affords no solid satisfaction, except in the consciousness of doing well, and in the hopes of another life." Even Cowper, whose constitutional malady has been erroneously attributed to his piety, had gleams of the utmost delight while meditating on religion; and in one of his last letters he says, "To rejoice day and night was my employment. Too happy to sleep much, I thought it lost time that was spent in slumber." It was observed, after the death of Cowper, that

his countenance wore "an expression of holy surprise," obvious to all who attended him.

For periods of suffering, the philosophy of this world can, at best, teach only fortitude, but Christianity gives resignation, by means of which the Christian advances steadily through the most piercing of trials, and even descends alone, without reluctance, into the grave. It is called in Holy Scripture the Valley of the Shadow of Death, being only the shadow, but not the everlasting reality; for there, though the body be buried, the soul is disentombed from its earthly prison, and emancipated into glory and unalloyed felicity.

Doddridge, who occupied a long life in the study of his own mind, and in forming a true estimate of life, said to an intimate friend, "I never now think of death, but joy springs up in my heart." Well would it be for every individual, if we could each sincerely and deliberately make the same declaration; but how few, if they received notice that this night they must appear before the tribunal of Christ, would not adopt the exclamation of the royal Psalmist, — "O spare me a little while!"

— Death cannot come

To those untimely who are fit to die.

The less of this cold world, the more of heaven;

The briefer life, the earlier immortality.

The Old Testament saints, such as Hezekiah

and David, seem less clearly to have appreciated, and less firmly to have grasped, the support of religion in death, than those under the Gospel dispensation, but the difference in the mildness of the Gospel and the terror of the law is well exemplified, when we consider that the last words contained in the Old Testament are a curse, and the last words in the New Testament are a blessing. How startling too was the ascent of Elijah in a chariot of fire, compared with that of our Divine Saviour, who, by His own inherent power and dignity, glorified Himself in the sight of the disciples, and without effort or visible means arose to heaven. Many well-disciplined Christians are brought at last to so happy a state, that there remains not for one of them a pang of regret between himself and the heaven to which he is hastening. His passport to a better world he believes to be already prepared, and that his body like a loosened shroud, shall fall off, leaving the immortal spirit, which is in reality a man's self, to be translated into eternity. There the garment of mortality shall, for a time, be dispensed with and left behind, as a pledge in the grave, till, in due time, the Christian is permitted to reclaim it for a reunion with the soul, the everlasting mind, in perfect felicity, unlimited both as to time and degree.

There is probably no man who does not expect

to live another year, and who would not think a still longer period necessary to prepare aright for eternity; yet, though not a day elapses in which some thousands of human beings do not expire, it has become, to the real injury of our own happiness, the almost incurable propensity of our nature to consider the termination of life distant, because we wish it were so. This is much more easily done than to cultivate the conviction which no man need fear shall ever be too painfully prominent, as it is actually difficult of attainment, and almost impossible to bring home to our consciousness, that our latter end is really near, and that it is absolutely and immediately necessary to prepare accordingly.

Among the strange and melancholy expedients whereby men try to persuade themselves and others that they shall live, when a secret conviction tells them, and when all around perceive that they are dying, none is more remarkable than the mania, which often seizes an invalid at such times for making new acquisitions of the toys and possessions of this world. A man, especially if he has been a notorious miser, begins, within a few weeks of his death, frequently spending his fortune to an extent, that, in his best days, he never would have dreamed of. In his last hours he astonishes, and, truth to say, shocks his friends, by proposing to bespeak new equipages, clothes, books,

or pictures, wishing to deceive himself into a belief that he shall live to enjoy them. On a recent occasion a splendid new carriage turned its wheels for the first time at the funeral of the deceased owner, who, though wealthy beyond calculation, would scarcely during his life be at the expense of an umbrella: and so common is this propensity in the parsimonious, to almost posthumous liberality, that in France, when a miser suddenly becomes thus extravagant, the common proverbial remark is, "Nous allons mourir."

Very different from such agitating self-deceit is the calm and dignified composure of a Christian mind waiting in perfect peace to know the will of God, and cheerfully willing to meet it. After a life of Christian liberality and of active diligent preparation, the Rev. Mr. Richardson said, when dying, "I have no fear, I have no doubt, I have no unbelief. Death is nothing to me."

The Christian does not attempt, then, to hide from his consideration the solemn truth, that the very first breath he drew in life, was the first motion towards his last, and that the first minute in which he began to live he began to die. Each year he advances in life seeming shorter than the one which preceded it, his days hurry onwards with a descent of increasing rapidity towards the inevitable grave. Those who would not then plunge, with unsheltered head, into the stormy

agonies of a conscience too late awakened to all the horrors of apprehension and remorse, will, in good time, throw themselves on the mercy of a benignant Saviour. With such protection, though all our sins shall be, on the day of judgment, as distinctly displayed before our own minds, and before the eyes of an assembled universe, as if they were written on a tablet of brass upon which the sun is shining, yet the long catalogue will only serve to evidence the wonder and magnitude of our redemption.

A gentleman some time since invited a party to dine with him, who were all habitual swearers, and he had their whole conversation secretly taken down. When their many blasphemous expressions were, in a leisurely manner, read aloud to them some time afterwards, they became so shocked at the result, that their friend, seizing the opportunity, earnestly remonstrated, saying, if they could not hear without shame the evil words spoken during a very few hours, how would they stand the recapitulation of all they had uttered through a long course of years when brought as evidence against them before the tribunal of an offended God?

The well-known Philip Henry said, a short time before he expired, "See to it that your work be not undone, when your time is done, lest you be undone for ever." Too many seem to

think of preparing for their momentous end as if it were a thing to be accomplished in two or three days, and the proper time immediately before they die; yet to be adequately fitted requires the ceaseless labour of a lifetime. It is a work not to be taken up to-day, and laid down again to-morrow, but it demands to be persevered in with undeviating earnestness from first to last, so that when death at length comes, nothing comes but what has been long expected, and the Christian is able to say, "This is not the first time I have thought of dying—the cord of life is not suddenly broken, but has been gradually untied."

When the great and truly good Lord Lyttleton, who had been diligently preparing for his end, was seized with his last sickness, he said, "I must leave my soul in the same state it was before this illness. I find this a very inconvenient time for solicitude about any thing." Of him it has been truly said,

His mind was moral as the preacher's tongue,
And strong to wield all science worth the name.

Persons of a thinking mind will often readily and perseveringly devote their attention to acquiring a knowledge of foreign countries. They study with interest the habits and manners of China, Greenland, or Japan, places which they never

intend to visit, with which they have no connection, and which they might die in peace without ever having heard of, while they deliberately avoid all intelligence respecting that "better country," as real, and far more actually near to us all; where so many of our most intimate associates are already assembled—to which we are ourselves soon and certainly hastening—which we can only reach in safety by the guidance of God's Holy Spirit, which it is our best wisdom to seek, and our utter destruction to miss. Fenelon's advice on that subject is the best:—"La préparation que je vous demande pour recevoir le Saint Esprit est, de ne point écouter le votre." And Philip Henry recommended every man before he took the sacrament to ask himself these three questions:—"What am I? What have I done? and What do I want?"

In our occasional contemplations of this all-important subject, we are apt to shut up our ideas of death into the narrow compass of that moment when we expire; but the actual truth is, that it pervades every moment of our career. Even when buoyant with life and energy, we are unceasingly losing and spending our existence. In the very day when Adam ate the forbidden fruit, he began to die. It is not the first moment of death when we expire, but the last. Every pulse that beats in the heart of man tolls his passing-

bell, and the whole of our existence that we have yet experienced is already dead, never more to be recalled. Nothing of the past remains to man, except those affections, motives, and responsibilities belonging to his never-dying mind, which follow him into eternity. Well-placed attachments, faithful friendships, fervent prayers, struggles against temptation, knowledge rightly acquired, influence conscientiously used, sorrows submissively borne, and an intellect carefully cultivated, are all talents now intrusted to the Christian, for which, when he is restored to consciousness and to identity, he must there render up a very strict account.

For know, each parting hour gives up a ghost
To dwell within thee — an eternal Now.

All men are ready to acknowledge that a death-bed is not the scene in which to prepare for death; and it is recorded in history, that when the Constable of France, De Montmorency, was mortally wounded in battle, some of his afflicted friends having admonished him to die as courageously as he had lived, and like a good Christian, he answered, "Gentlemen, and fellow-soldiers! the man who has been enabled to attempt to live well during fourscore years past, need not seek now how to die well for a quarter of an hour. But my having been enabled to live well, is not, observe, the

ground of my dependence ; no, my sole hope is in Jesus Christ."

We must not accustom ourselves to imagine, that preparing for the mere moment of dissolution is the very business of religion, and to pass unscathed through that great ordeal the main end of it. The intention of Christianity is, not to make us ready for a temporary exigency, for that hour when animal life is to be extinguished, and when the small drop of our existence is about to be merged in the great ocean of eternity, but the aim is that we should be habitually prepared for the sublime glory and happiness which is to follow. Christians are not to be judged by their death, but by their life ; and such an extended purpose would truly strengthen and elevate the soul : whereas, to concentrate our entire consideration upon that one point of existence, when the fetters of mortality shall be thrown off, must narrow and darken the noble tendency of religious faith, hope, and enterprise.

The learned and judicious Hooker used these remarkable words before he expired : — " Since I owe thee a death, Lord, let it not be terrible, and then take thine own time. I submit to it. Let not mine, O Lord, but thy will be done. I have lived to see that this world is made up of perturbations, and I have been long preparing to leave it, and gathering comfort for the dreadful

hour of making my account with God, which I now apprehend to be near. Though I have, by his grace, loved him in my youth, and feared him in my age, and laboured to have a conscience void of offence to him and to all men, yet if thou, Lord, be extreme to mark what I have done amiss, who can abide it? And, therefore, where I have failed, Lord, show mercy to me, for I plead not my righteousness, but the forgiveness of my unrighteousness, for his merits who died to purchase a pardon for penitent sinners. God hath heard my daily petitions, for I am at peace with all men, and he is at peace with me; from which blessed assurance I feel that inward joy which this world can neither give nor take from me."

The thoughts and feelings of a mind in its highest reach of intellectual refinement and of natural sensibility, are touchingly expressed by that very accomplished writer Charles Lamb, in his last Essays of Elia, wherein he says, in language with which all must sympathise, — "I begin to count the probabilities of my duration, and to grudge at the expenditure of moments like misers' farthings. In proportion as the years both lessen and shorten, I would fain lay my ineffectual finger upon the spoke of the great wheel. I am in love with this green earth, the face of town and country, the unspeakable rural solitudes, and the sweet security of streets. Sun, and sky,

and breeze, and solitary walks, and summer holidays, and the greenness of fields, and society, and the cheerful glass, and candle-light, and fire-side conversations, and innocent vanities, and jests, and irony itself—do these go out with life?”

In this catalogue of earthly delights the best and highest of all is omitted, the union of Christian friends in prayer, and also in praise, to the Giver of all, for the enjoyment of such long-experienced and much-to-be-prized blessings. But another writer, as eloquent, who looked with a different eye through all the attractions of nature up to nature's God, has recorded his musings in language so affecting and appropriate, that none can read the allegorical hymn bequeathed to the world by Bishop Heber without feeling desirous that its truth may hereafter be exemplified in their own case, as it has already been in his.

One morning in the month of May
 I wander'd o'er the hill,
 Though nature all around was gay,
 My heart was heavy still.

Can God, I thought, the just, the great,
 These meaner creatures bless,
 And yet deny to man's estate
 The boon of happiness.

Tell me, ye woods, ye smiling plains,
 Ye blessed birds around,
 In which of nature's wide domains
 Can bliss for man be found.

The birds wild caroll'd o'er my head,
The breeze around me blew,
And nature's awful chorus said,
No bliss for man she knew.

I question'd love, whose early ray
So rosy bright appears,
And heard the timid genius say,
His light was dimm'd by tears.

I question'd friendship, friendship sigh'd,
And thus her answer gave,
"The few whom fortune never turn'd,
Were silent in the grave."

I asked if vice could bliss bestow —
Vice boasted loud and well,
But fading from her wither'd brow —
The borrow'd roses fell.

I sought of feeling, if her skill
Could soothe the wounded breast,
And found her mourning, faint, and still
For others' woes distressed.

I question'd virtue — virtue sigh'd,
No boon could she dispense,
Nor virtue was her name, she cried,
But humble penitence.

I question'd death — the grisly shade
Relax'd his brow severe;
And "I am happiness," he said,
"If virtue guide thee here."

CHAP. VI.

INEQUALITY IN THE LENGTH AND IN THE HAPPINESS
OF MEN'S LIVES.

I thought that the course of the pilgrim to heaven
Would be bright as the summer, and glad as the morn,
Thou show'dst me the path—it was dark and uneven —
All rugged with rock, and all tangled with thorn.

There are mansions exempted from sin and from woe,
But they stand in a region by mortals untrod ;
There are rivers of joy, but they roll not below ;
There is rest, but it dwells in the presence of God.

HEBER.

As this world is described to be the magnificent theatre on which our Almighty Creator displays to us the wonders of his power, it is also the stage where we are called on once to act our own parts, without the possibility of any future repetition. It matters little, for so short a period, whether the part each has to perform be a conspicuous or a subordinate one, provided only it be made the very best of, knowing that we are born but once, and die but once ; therefore, if our duties be so mistaken or neglected now as to leave us unready at last, eternity itself cannot rectify the error. Trusting, then, implicitly in

our divine Saviour's propitiation, we must, nevertheless, in every action and feeling, endeavour to imitate his character, remembering with what minute and hourly care it must be done. If we hold up a mirror to the sun it receives his image, and the more we polish the mirror the brighter does the reflexion shine in it; but if we suffer the surface to tarnish, then the solar brilliancy is lost: and thus it is with the Christian's imitation of the sacred model it is his duty to copy.

No man is intrusted with two souls, nor can he turn the hour-glass when the last grain of sand has run out; but after a lifetime allowed him to prepare for an exchange of worlds, his departure hence is final. Every worldly business if done amiss to-day may perhaps be remedied to-morrow, but the earthly account once closed is closed for ever. While life yet remains, "While yet the lamp holds on to burn," the greatest sinner is encouraged and earnestly admonished to plead for pardon; but there is a tide in the concerns of religion, and that last hour is the final crisis. Though justice stands on the one hand ready to cast in her sword against the impenitent sinner, still mercy lingers in sight to the last, willing to rescue him, even in the eleventh hour, from destruction.

The very condition on which we receive life, or any other gift of God, is, that we shall be

prepared and satisfied whenever he commands us to resign it. We dwell here in a lodging, and have received notice to quit. We are tenants at will, and must hourly be ready, if summoned by the Master of the house, to relinquish our present home. That hour is on the wing when our lease shall expire, when the time shall come for the schemes of to-day and the hopes of to-morrow to end, when every moment of life shall have been spent that our Creator intended from the beginning we should enjoy. Each living man has, finally, a sickness and a death before him, and how unexpectedly the summons may come most of those now in another world could testify. It is well for the Christian to be found awaiting his expected end like the late pious Mr. Durham, who might be said, in the words of Scripture, to "die daily." On being told by a clergyman that his last hour was at hand, and that now, therefore, he had nothing to do but to die, he answered, with calm satisfaction, "I bless God I have not had that to do these many years."

"Hark!" cries a voice, that awes the silenced air,

"The doom of man in my dread bosom lies,

Be yours awhile to pace this vale of care,

Be his to soar with seraphs in the skies."

Though the number and duration of men be like leaves in a forest, yet, strange to perceive, each individual must learn the lesson for himself,

by his own experience, of the uncertainty of life and of all it bestows. However dearly bought, experience is of no use to any one but the owner, while the preacher preaches in vain to those who neither hear nor take heed. Like Cassandra, who had the gift of foretelling future events, but the torture that nobody was ever to believe her prophecies, the Christian minister warns, teaches, and exhorts, on the transitory nature and uncertain tenure of human life in vain. He illustrates his instructions with instances which we hear every day, without laying them to heart; and still our thoughts and plans stretch into the long futurity of this world, but stop short of that futurity which is, perhaps, nearer, and undoubtedly more certain.

If the length of every man's life were precisely the same, we should feel so secure in our early years as to postpone entirely all preparation for departing; but in such a case, towards our latter days the minds of many would become hopelessly encrusted with melancholy. They would be overwhelmed by contemplating the immediate certainty of their fate, in anticipating which, so closely at hand, their frame of mind would probably resemble that of a criminal on the eve of execution. When Keats, in the very spring of his life, was about to expire, he said, "I already feel the daisies growing over me."

“Our lives are not all alike: their length is measured at the will of him who gave them,” observes M. Malherbe: “he gathereth the fruit while green, he stays till it be ripe, and he lets it hang till it be rotten.” Whatsoever he does, we owe this submission to our Creator, to believe he does nothing unjustly. He does no wrong, neither to them he takes away young, nor to them whom he suffers to grow old; but every year we see the healthy pray for the sick, and go themselves the first. We wonder, perhaps, to see a man who is in a forest fell all the crooked trees, and leave all the straight; but that man having a ship to build, not a house, selects that kind of timber. We have no model of the many mansions in our Father’s house, therefore we need not wonder, when he takes in his materials, why he selects the young and leaves the old, or why the sickly outlive those who seem in perfect health.

As God then appoints that some flowers shall bloom till December, and others perish in May, long habit has accustomed us to see it so, while no man questions the wisdom or the justice of such a decree; but since we prepare our gardens accordingly, why can we not also prepare our minds, in the conviction that the lives of all men, the lives of our contemporaries, our neighbours, and ourselves, are like flowers of the field, soon, and perhaps very prematurely, to be blighted by the

frost of death? "In the gay spring blossom of hope, in the very morning of a religious course, death often sets the seal of eternity on the young, and those who were lovely in life are made perfect in death;" but let the Christian die when he may, even in the earliest dawn of youth, if God has indeed ripened his soul to perfection, he is ready, because fitted for a higher and happier destiny. The very youngest Christian might, in the hour of death, adopt that exclamation ascribed to the hero of Waterloo in the moment of victory: "The battle is won and my life is of no value now!"

The rose that lives but a day has fulfilled as entirely its own vocation as the oak that stands for a century: the one blooms as queen of the garden, the other as monarch of the wood; but for both there is an appointed period when they shall lay their honours in the dust. The Christian, too, must wither and die; but whether early or late, there is ample compensation for every hour which is cut off from time, as he thus begins, only at an earlier period, "the travel of eternity." The mariner has sailed long enough who reaches the harbour, the soldier has fought long enough who gains the victory, the steed has run long enough when he touches the goal, and the Christian has lived long enough on earth, be his days ever so few, who has made his way to heaven—

Where not a sullying breath can rise,
To dim his glory in the skies.

An interesting account is given by Doddridge of his having a very remarkable dream, wherein he imagined himself translated to another world. There pictures were exhibited to him representing all the sorrows and temptations that had formerly assailed him in life; and his ecstasy to think that they were all happily over awoke him, when he nearly wept for disappointment to find himself still in this world. If memory were to lead any one by the hand through such a gallery of long-forgotten events, and revive thus in pictures every scene of our past existence: how should we wonder at the importance once attached to them, and especially with regard to their influence on our present enjoyment, rather than their effects on our future welfare! With some such feelings, probably, may the Christian be permitted to look back upon his past trials in our sorrow-stricken world, as on a shadow that swept past him and is gone. He will then trace, with ever-growing delight and gratitude, how the hand of God led him safely through every perplexing way, till from the sleep of death he was awakened to an eternity of perfect enjoyment —

Where in their bright results shall rise
Thoughts, virtues, friendships, griefs, and joys.

The world has been compared to a quicksand, in which men sink, who stop long to gaze at all its fascinating attractions. Even a too anxious anticipation of the trials and toils of life may palsy the energies of our minds, by creating sorrows which are not really to be inflicted. Who would not shrink appalled, if he saw at one glance before his vision the whole task of existence, its labours, its grief, and even the entire sum of its joys? For all these we obtain strength, dealt out to us as it may be needed; and many a trial which, if anticipated previously, we should have supposed it scarcely possible to survive, has reached us ameliorated by so many accompaniments of consolation, that we wonder to find those griefs endurable which we thought must have crushed us to the earth.

Man is the only created being able and willing to torment himself; an illustration of which may be seen in the case of many excellent Christians, who are vexed or desponding because fully persuaded that their own faith could not have stood the test by which the faith of others has been tried and proved. A truly excellent believer suffered great distress of mind, not long since, because in reading about the sufferings of the martyrs in the early church, she honestly confessed that a painful doubt had forced itself into her mind whether her own constancy could have withstood so tor-

turing an ordeal. She became certain, at last, that, with the stake in sight, she would have become an apostate, and the idea haunted her mind long, and often with remorse; but her's was a most unnecessary care, as the faith of Christians is given like the manna in the wilderness, enough always for the day; while even to the last extremity God may be relied on skilfully to proportion his support to our necessity. He will even give, when requisite, but not till then; dying strength for a dying hour.

Like Addison, who sent for Lord Warwick to witness how a Christian can die, every one in such circumstances should testify, for the comfort of those around, that a lifetime of preparation really ends in perfect peace. The only true consolation in losing the best of friends may become abundantly sufficient if they are enabled, at the very last, to assure us how firm and clear is their hope of a better life, and how ardently they have prayed for us to be enabled to follow in the same track of brightening hope and happiness.

Some years since, a dying Christian, a man of talent, rank, and fortune, who had lived in the very sunshine of hope and prosperity, being seized with mortal illness, and finding himself reduced, by a sudden stroke, from the prime of life to impending dissolution, summoned his friends and servants around him, to whom he addressed these words,

“You may often have thought me fond of this world, and that I had much to attach me to it, but believe my solemn assurance in the hour of death, that never till now did I know what real heartfelt happiness is, and I bid adieu to every earthly possession, in the sure and certain hope of a better inheritance.”

Who would not, in such an hour, have exchanged places with him? and what can be a greater contrast than the peace he then enjoyed, and the agony of mind besetting those who, having made no previous preparation, turn in vain, on every side, for one word or one look of religious comfort?—insolvent bankrupts, with no friend to redeem their souls, who are suffering, helpless, dying: while their own consciences upbraid them, their best friends can but urge them to repent, and God Himself is, to them, still “an unknown God.” Such men, in the apprehension of a more than mortal death, feel themselves overtaken as unpreparedly by destruction, as Archimedes was, killed when gazing at the figures he had traced on the sand.

When Pitt, at the age of 47, in the height of his fame and usefulness, was most unexpectedly summoned from the busy stage of public life, he said, with his dying breath, to the Bishop of Lincoln, “I fear I have, like too many other men, neglected prayer too much to have any ground for

hope that it can be efficacious on a deathbed — but,” added he, rising as he spoke, and clasping his hands with the utmost fervour and devotion, “I throw myself *entirely* (the last word being pronounced with a strong emphasis) upon the mercy of God, through the merits of Christ.” It was a striking instance of vicissitude in human affairs, that the day after Pitt’s death, a gentleman, not aware of the event, and wishing to call upon him, went to the door of his villa, and was surprised to find it open — he walked in, crossed several passages, and entered a room, where he found the body laid out, and not a living person near.

President Dwight being asked on his deathbed whether he felt willing to die, calmly replied, “My life must answer for me!” How pleasing to have such an appeal in his power to comfort those friends who had witnessed his long course of preparation for a world of perfect knowledge, perfect holiness, and perfect love! Well, indeed, is it for any Christian who can as confidently point to the past for an evidence of his sincerity. With ceaseless energy that eminent and exemplary man had long prepared for his last journey, leaving nothing unprovided, and throwing unflinchingly aside all the encumbrances which might have impeded his departure; the inference, therefore, was plain, that, when the time came, his being perfectly ready made him perfectly willing to set out. No Chris-

tian can be satisfied in his own case with seeking to enter heaven who is not striving; for the struggle must be long and severe, to obtain an entrance within that strait gate, which is too strait for men in general. The difficulty is such, that it can only be conquered by that Divine Spirit who prompts our prayers, who answers them, and under whose gracious influence our best wisdom is to take the duties of the day diligently, as they are portioned out to us, trusting in God to carry us safely, by the calm clear light of Revelation, through the unknown trials which are yet to follow. Still our dependence on Divine aid is no encouragement to indolence or presumption, and we must advance through life in a spirit of circumspection, like that recommended by Oliver Cromwell to his soldiers when crossing a river in the face of their enemies. "Trust in the Lord, but keep your powder dry."

— In the pride

Of youth and health, by sufferings yet untried,
We talk of death, as something which 'twere sweet,
In glory's arms, exultingly to meet,
As undismay'd, amidst the tears of all,
We fold the mantle regally to fall.
Hush ! fond enthusiast ! — still obscure and lone,
Yet not less terrible because unknown,
Is the last hour of thousands — they retire
From life's throng'd paths, unnoticed to expire,

As the light leaf, whose fall to ruin bears
Some trembling insect's little world of cares,
Descends in silence, while around waves on
The mighty forest, reckless what is gone !
Such is man's doom — and ere an hour be flown,
Start not, thou trifler, such may be thine own.

HEMANS.

CHAP. VII.

PERFECT PEACE FOUND IN PERFECT RESIGNATION.

Why should we faint, and fear to live alone,
Since all alone, so heaven has will'd, we die,
Nor even the tenderest heart, and next our own,
Knows half the reasons why we smile or sigh?
Christian Year.

THOSE only can be considered happy, who, instead of shutting their eyes to the sterner realities of life, and to their own true position and prospects in it, whatever these may be, have steadily looked the very worst in the face, and reconciled their minds to meet it—who have determined not to walk backwards towards that which is inevitable, but unflinchingly to endure all the painful vicissitudes of existence, to resign its pleasures when necessary, and to close their lives at last with calm and hopeful resignation. Even Christians, little as they desire the discipline of sorrow, need often to be goaded onwards by affliction, or at how slow and hesitating a pace would they advance towards heaven! We loiter in the sunshine, and hurry onwards through the storm; for the observation is most true, that grief gives wings to the soul, which

carry the well tried sufferer over every obstacle, and enable him to surmount every discouragement.

When Jacob was honoured by a vision, in which he saw the angels of God ascending and descending upon a ladder that reached between heaven and earth, his bodily condition could scarcely have been more desolate, lying as he did in an open field, with no pillow but a stone. Who, on the most luxurious bed, would not envy the patriarch such a vision of glory, and such a source of delight, as he enjoyed on that occasion? and when Galileo was imprisoned in his cell, surrounded by darkness and adversity, was not his mind more at large and more blessed than that of the most prosperous among his persecutors?

Thus, in the silent night of adversity, our minds are darkly overshadowed, that thought and conscience, God's own messengers, to whom in general we turn a too inattentive ear, may at length be observed and listened to, till our meditations under so sacred an influence may truly ascend from earth to heaven, and finally settle there. By such teaching the Christian acquires tastes and habits here such as he shall wish to preserve for ever; and if heaven be a state of mind, as much as a place of habitation, he antedates his arrival there, by feeling an assured hope of enjoying that ceaseless happiness in eternity of which he already experiences the commencement.

There is a land of pure delight,
Where saints immortal reign
Infinite day excludes the night,
And pleasures banish pain.

There everlasting spring abides,
And never-withering flowers :
Death like a narrow sea divides
This heavenly land from ours. — WATTS.

While all that is mortal perishes, all that is moral survives everlastingly. Thoughts, feelings, and principles are as immortal as that soul which is responsible for them ; and as the breeze sweeps by, but bends the trees into their permanent forms, as the passing stream leaves many indelible marks engraved on the stones underneath, and as the perpetual falling of a single drop of water pierces the hardest rock, so do the flitting emotions of our minds stamp an impression on the character, which is eternal.

Sorrow is truly said to be “ a kind chastiser of the soul,” and no doubt adversity gives an edge to the character, which prosperity takes off. “ *L’adversité qui abat les cœurs faibles, grandit les âmes fortes.*” This remark was most singularly exemplified formerly, amidst the unprecedented vicissitudes and horrors of the French revolution, when the war-cry of the mob was, “ Peace on the cottage, and war on the palace !” Then persons nursed in the very lap of luxury, ladies especially,

many of whom had lived in the most enervating self-indulgence, were suddenly plunged into the utmost extreme of mental and bodily suffering, threatened with an ignominious death, and oppressed by poverty and privation. During such a period of adversity and danger, it is astonishing to behold them suddenly endowed with a degree of enterprise, fortitude, and self-denial, almost unexampled in history. The most generous disinterestedness, and the most elevated courage in privation and peril, at once shone forth in the characters of those who could not, unless so severely tested, have conjectured that within their own minds such capabilities existed. Thus it continually occurs on less remarkable occasions, that those whose virtues and excellences were in a languid, almost dormant, state, from having no urgent call to exertion, become aroused, when sufficient scope and stimulus are given, to a degree of life and vigour hitherto unknown. It is, even amidst great hardships and trials, happiness enough for those who thus discover in themselves a strength of character, and power of self-denial, not before supposed to exist, and far better to be thus exercised in mind, than to be as heedless, though as happy, as the little songsters of the grove, who have "no sorrow in their song, no winter in their year."

It is recorded that a gardener at Oxford once

pointed out to the late Mr. Cecil a fine pomegranate tree, saying that it had been a useless log, bearing nothing except leaves, till at length the owner decided to cut it down, and sawed the stem almost through. In this state circumstances induced him for a time to leave it standing, and immediately afterwards, that hitherto barren tree revived to new vigour, producing an abundant crop of fruit. This little narrative so aptly illustrating the purpose of God in a Christian's afflictions, deeply impressed the young student's mind at that moment, and he intimates that the recollection became afterwards a source of much support and consolation to his mind in the many sorrows of his subsequent life.

For all men, the youngest and the oldest, the richest and the poorest, the brightest in talent, or the most deficient, there is ample occupation during every hour and moment, so to discipline our souls, that the Christian may look, with courage and confidence, through the gate of futurity, dividing what has been from what shall be, into that world of light beyond, where change and adversity are unknown. Even the wise virgins were admonished to trim their lamps, before they could be ready, with all their foresight and prudence, to meet the summons which called them forth; and it was an excellent answer of an English clergyman when asked by a follower of Wesley whether

he thought in this life man could attain perfection — “Let us seek after it as eagerly as if it were attainable.”

All men can accurately measure the length of time, but very few adequately measure its inestimable worth; and the various degrees of value attached by different individuals to time become a subject of interesting observation to those who can in any degree appreciate its importance. The exclamation of Queen Elizabeth on her deathbed was a very impressive lesson to us all. “Oh time, time—a world of wealth for a moment of time!” If the possession of an additional hour or day could sometimes be sold by auction, how very cheaply some men would sell theirs, and what a price would thus be offered for a single moment by those who are, too late, beginning to discover how unprofitably theirs have been squandered. When Mr. Cecil was dying he said, “How little do we think of improving the time, while we have opportunity. I find every thing but religion only vanity—to recollect a promise of the Bible, this is substance! Nothing will do but the Bible. If I read authors, and hear different opinions, I cannot say *this* is truth! I cannot grasp it as substance; but the Bible gives me something to *hold*. I have learnt more within these curtains than from all the books I ever read.”

The different value attached by even the most

intelligent persons to their time and opportunities of usefulness or enjoyment is often singularly contrasted. In early youth, I frequented the house of a very affluent relative, who was then, and has ever since been to me, an object of wonder. He seemed never to read, write, walk, nor even to open a newspaper; but he sat most of the day alone, before an empty table, where the reflexion of his own face in the bright mahogany was apparently the only object he had to contemplate. There seated, with a look of smiling complacency, he waited always apparently to see what would happen next, and felt evidently satisfied that he led a life of perfect respectability and decorum. From such a scene of inanity it might have been a relief even to suffer pain, to have a fit of the gout, or to be occasionally in danger of an accident, but his drowsy respectability was undisturbed evidently by any recollection that, to the latest verge of life, duties may be found, in the active discharge of which the weight of time is forgotten, and the prospects of futurity improved. Great, indeed, may be the happiness, even in life's final stage, of becoming useful, honoured, and beloved, while sharing the felicities of others, and diligently preparing for that better country, in which probably all those with whom its earlier scenes were enjoyed have already assembled, to be united together for ever.

When the celebrated Matthew Henry was expiring, he addressed those around him in these words:—"You have been accustomed to notice the sayings of dying men. This is mine. That a life spent in the service of God, and in communion with him, is the most comfortable and pleasant life that any one can live in this world." If such an existence as his was more than commonly happy, then how much to be desired also was such a death! He who had watched over every action, and meditated through life as if each hour were to be his last, must, indeed, have been ready! When such a Christian dies, it is like the stars of morning that die into the light of heaven; and when those dearest to ourselves, many perhaps in number, and deeply mourned, thus depart, may we not, even in the sharpest anguish, find comfort from considering that, however prematurely they seem called away, they have been promoted to a better portion than the best on earth?


As those who sleep are not dead, no more are the dead unconscious, for their souls are already arrived at the perfect rest of paradise, there to wait for their crown of glory; and should not we be consoled by reflecting on what they now are compared with what on earth they would have been, what they now enjoy compared with what they might have suffered, and what they have

gained by an early departure compared with what they might have lost?

Leaves have their time to fall,
And flowers to wither at the north wind's breath,
And stars to set — but all,
Thou hast all seasons for thine own, O Death!

HEMANS.

By such thoughts we should endeavour to check all useless and impotent lamentations on the inevitable sorrows of life. No doubt the existence of every mortal is filled with vicissitude, a strongly contrasted mosaic of light and dark dispensations, all necessary to complete the picture; but while ready for both extremes, the Christian takes many opportunities, even when basking in the glare of prosperity, to retire within himself, to the internal home of his own thoughts, there to seek for humble strength, submissive piety, and patient hope. As men enjoy amidst the shady groves a grateful relief from the dazzling sunshine, so does the happiest mind experience rest and refreshment by turning into the more sober regions of thought and feeling. Religion is indeed much more than a soothing friend in this life, on which to rest the affections, being also a necessary protection in all its thousand vicissitudes; and to those who in prosperity have wisely armed themselves by the timely anticipation of a change, sorrow at best



may seem to weigh upon them like a burden, but it cannot strike like a blow.

Every mortal who exists has experienced, or must yet do so, moments of helpless grief, when all things seem as if they had combined to go wrong, and when, amidst the accumulation of sorrow and disappointment, he scarcely knows where to turn for comfort. In such an hour of wintry desolation let him borrow consolation from reflecting, that those who have suffered the greatest afflictions, and who on account of their admirable conduct under these trials are most worthy of belief, have all united in declaring, that, after trying the consolations of religion, they proved to be amply sufficient for the very greatest emergency. The faithful Christian may to his last hour say, like the late Lord Sidmouth, "I have always fought under the standard of hope, and I shall never desert it."

On a bed of suffering, in the house of mourning, even beside the grave of his best, his dearest, his only friend, still affliction after affliction, falling where it may, or how it may, finds the Christian shielded from utter prostration by the almighty hand of God himself. "Grief," as Archbishop Leighton observes, "is like a two-faced picture, which beheld on the one side as painful, hath an unpleasant visage; yet go round a little, and look

upon it as thy Father's will, and then it is
smiling, beautiful, and lovely.

Thus sorrow sent by God grows bright,
With more than rapture's ray,
As darkness shows us worlds of light,
We never saw by day.

HEBER.

CHAP. VIII.

THE EFFORTS OF MAN TO UNDERSTAND HIS OWN
NATURE AND DESTINY.

As from the wing, no scar the sky retains,
The parted wave no furrow from the keel,
So dies in human hearts the thought of death.

YOUNG.

It is both interesting and very remarkable to observe the pains taken, in ancient days, by heathen monarchs, heroes, and philosophers, to penetrate the mysteries of life. Though they anxiously wished for immortality, they could not bring themselves to feel entirely certain of it; nevertheless, instead of avoiding what is so often considered melancholy, they steadily contemplated the gloomiest recesses of thought, until their minds could calmly view what they would naturally have shrunk from. If we enter a darkened room, nothing at first is visible but the darkness; yet by remaining long there the eye grows so accustomed to the surrounding gloom, that objects become gradually discernible, and at length, what seemed at first impenetrably obscure, reveals itself at last distinctly and almost cheerfully. A child, if threatened with imprisonment in a darkened closet,

has his imagination instantly excited by terrors of his own fancy, and if dragged unwillingly forward he resists every approach to the scene of his punishment in an agony of fear; but let some kind friend previously lead him forward, clearly explaining that there really is nothing to apprehend, that he is soon to come forth again, that, in fact, he is already pardoned, and that the horrors he imagines are entirely created by his own fancy, then he might probably be induced to go willingly and almost gladly to encounter what was naturally an object to him of so much dread; and thus the mind of man may become so habituated to what he would by nature fear, that he shall at last find out its long-concealed pleasures.

How frequently and earnestly do the ancient philosophers seem to have inquired of themselves, and of each other—for they could appeal to no higher intelligence—“Whence am I? To what system of creation do I belong? Am I the offspring of chance, or am I created by an omnipotent and intelligent power? Am I watched over by an all-seeing eye? And when death shall snap asunder at last the brittle chain by which our bodies and souls are now united, what shall then be my destiny?”

To such questions as these no human being, whose mind is exalted above the animals that feed on a common, can be indifferent; and so

earnest were the heathens to preserve any glimpse of religious hope afforded to them, that never did they go to encounter any evil or danger without carrying their household gods visibly along with them. It would indeed be well if Christians were equally ardent to secure the performance of a promise given by the great God of heaven and earth that in all our wanderings, our sorrows, or trials, he will be with us as a protector and guide.

It is remarkable, certainly, to observe how little the heathens have ever wished, in their thoughts, to evade "the terrible and true." The Brahmins always had their sepulchres placed open before their doors, that by the memory of death they might learn to live. Saladin, the hero of Eastern history, wore always a black shirt, to remind him of his own mortality; and his last dying act was an endeavour to impress on all his subjects a salutary consideration of their latter end, by causing a herald who had formerly preceded him often with a banner of victory now to carry his shroud, streaming from the point of a lance, through the streets, while he loudly proclaimed, "This is all that now remains to Saladin the Great!" The Czar Peter, when, from the height of his glory and prosperity, he was about to be called away by death, mournfully remarked that he had been able to reform his people, but could

not reform himself; and Philip of Macedonia, instead of endeavouring to flatter himself with the expectation of long life, hired a slave to admonish him daily that he was mortal.

The Emperors of Constantinople, whose magnificent crown was surmounted by a diamond cross, to intimate that it not only adorned the head, but laid on it a weight of care and responsibility, were presented at their coronation with a tomb, that in the beginning of their greatness its end might also be kept in view; and the ancient Spanish kings, within the walls of their magnificent Escorial, erected a cemetery to remind them, hourly, how soon the honour and splendour they enjoyed within that noble palace must be laid in the dust.

It is not, then, the melancholy or hypocondriacal only who make it a sacred duty, and even sometimes a solemn gratification, to dive into truth, and to meditate on their inevitable end. The wisest, the greatest, and the best of heathens, though the anticipation must have been cold and heavy as a lifeless stone on their hearts, nevertheless courted the subject. A dark, impenetrable curtain hung over their futurity, which has been withdrawn from that of the Christian. Death must have been to them a dreary and mysterious prospect indeed, considering that their notions of immortality did not include any belief in such personal identity as admitted of individuals re-

cognising each other hereafter. Though Pagans deified the illustrious dead, none ever dreamed of their glorified bodies being re-animated to a new and better existence, in which all the sinless pleasures of life should be continued, increased, and purified into perfection.

It is pleasing to learn from history that the solace of Sir Philip Sidney, during the last night of his mortal sufferings, was derived from conversing with dignified composure on the immortality of the soul, while he compared the vague conjectures of Pagan philosophy with the truths of Revelation. The light which then shone upon his understanding was calm and clear, while he gratefully acknowledged the blessing that it was so; but how sadly different must have been the emotions of such thinking minds as those of Socrates and Seneca, while they wearied themselves with unanswered conjectures respecting their own origin and destiny!

Let the Christian look with admiration and pity on the struggle of such noble intellects, "the glory and butt of the universe," bewildered in their attempts to penetrate those solemn mysteries, which are made plain and easy to himself, and let him gratefully cultivate the opportunities which would have been so deeply valued by others. The very facility we now find in obtaining the means of instruction makes us the more apt to

overlook its inestimable worth. Those who have been from their earliest childhood accustomed to the constant sound of the church-going bell, to the use of a convenient pew in a neighbouring chapel, to see a splendidly bound Bible invariably on their tables at home, and the writings of the most learned divines, ready to be consulted, on a shelf in their library, are apt to forget how invaluable such privileges are, and perhaps even to look upon the Bible itself as but a troublesome creditor on their time and attention.

With books, as with men, people have now many acquaintances, and no intimate friends, yet the student, who knows perfectly all which has been written by half a dozen of the wisest men that ever lived, has perhaps learned as much as any one of these ever knew, and must at any rate rank before the superficial reader in a book club who rushes through the stream of literature, at the modern pace of three volumes a day, stoppages included, and dismisses them from his mind as quickly as he does from his table. In former times, children, especially, had but one or two volumes for their entire library, and almost learned these by heart, but now it seems to them a perfectly adequate reason for declining to open a book if they can say, "I have read it;" and the Bible, which was formerly the chief resource of young students, as well as of old, is carelessly

hurried over, and looked upon by too many as a mere group of unconnected texts, or a volume of ancient history.

A clergyman made the following quaint address from his pulpit one day, to the juvenile members of his congregation, which told with great effect upon them all at the time : — “Attend well to what I say, children, and you may perhaps understand me as well as older people do, and indeed a great deal better, if you listen, and if they do not !” In the same way, if our Bibles are not attended to, nor our minds exercised in considering those great mysteries which occupied the thoughts of Pagan philosophers, we shall not only remain far more ignorant than they, but also incur a fearful penalty for squandering those privileges and advantages which they would so much better have known how to estimate. We learn from the historical account of Socrates, how very nearly he had groped his own unassisted way to the haven of truth, while these singularly penetrating remarks are expressed in his own words : — “Though God be unseen, it is plain that he exists, and that man is his particular care, though we cannot, by our senses, discover him. Do we perceive the thunder, whilst it strikes through all things which oppose it? Do we distinguish the winds, whilst they are tearing up all in our view before them? Our soul itself, with which we are so intimate, which moves and

animates us, is it visible? Can we behold it? The Great God, who has formed the universe, and supports the stupendous work in all its goodness and harmony, makes himself sufficiently visible by the endless wonders of which he is the Author, but continues always invisible himself."

Truly was it remarked that Socrates had become "almost a Christian," as nearly so, indeed, as the wisdom and virtue of mere human nature can attain. To him life was a problem, death a subject of anxious perplexity, and futurity a painful enigma; yet so energetically did he struggle to understand those mysterious subjects that he seems very nearly to have solved the difficulty. Having reached the conclusion that there must certainly be an intelligent Creator of all things, he met his last hour with dignified submission, while, holding the poisoned cup in his hand, he drained it to the dregs, making it the final act of his life to declare, that he did so as a pledge, to his afflicted friends, that he considered their separation but temporary.

Strength of principle is wonderfully displayed in the life and conduct of Brutus, who extinguished every personal interest or feeling in order to act according to his own conceptions of duty; and when, from a perverted view of right, he at length destroyed his own life, how mournful was his final declaration in respect to virtue, "I have pursued thee every where, and found thee nothing but a

name!" It proves obviously the perversion of human nature, to read how depraved were the beings worshipped by the heathens as Gods, for truly they lowered the standard of their conceptions to the level of their own minds and morals.

To the Christian, there is one model of perfect virtue exemplified through life, and in death; and to the Christian, also, the whole truth is revealed; its proofs are plainly before him, and obvious to his comprehension, though a proper attention to them can come only from himself. External objects force themselves on our notice; but the internal work of religion does not arise of itself: it must be diligently and actively cultivated.

Seneca lived at Rome when St. Paul did: the one enjoying the utmost light of philosophy, and the reverential admiration of all who listened to his lessons of human wisdom; the other persecuted, despised, and hated; yet the fame of Seneca now, though still shining conspicuously, is only like a candle burned to the socket, while that of St. Paul, founded on Divine truth, shines unalterably, like the stars of heaven. The knowledge of Socrates or of Seneca, in those days, is excelled now by that of the simplest Christian who studies his Bible, and there becomes acquainted with the revealed truths of religion, and with the mysterious counsels of God; for in the depths of religion there are secrets far beyond the plummet of mere hu-

man penetration to fathom, and mysteries beyond man's power so much as to believe, unless he be divinely taught.

David Hume argued once, at great length, against Principal Robertson, that the light of nature is amply sufficient for the guidance, through life, of any man's mind ; and after at least convincing himself of this proposition he arose to depart. When, passing through a long dark passage to leave the house, Hume stumbled over a tub which stood in his way, and he fell prostrate, considerably hurt, on the ground. "David!" said Robertson, in a tone of dry humour, when picking up his brother historian, "the light of nature is no more sufficient to guide your mind in safety, than it was this evening to guide your body."

Sad indeed were the last dreary hours of that most talented infidel, David Hume ! On his death-bed such were his mental sufferings that the sick-nurse who sat up with him at night was often afterwards heard to declare, that never while she lived would she consent again to attend on "a philosopher." One of the heaviest accusations of his memory on that occasion must have been the recollection of his own mother's last hours. In his absence from her he once received a letter, in which she declared herself to be dying, and added, that, as he had taken from her the only comfort that could now have supported her mind, she

begged him to come without delay and give her any consolation he could. Hume set out instantly ; but on arriving at home she was no more, and he deeply felt the startling event, with all its accompanying aggravations. How different must his feelings have then been from those of the excellent Hooker, who used to say, that if he had no other motive for becoming religious, he would earnestly strive to be so for the sake of his aged mother, that he might requite her care of him ; and, truly, though the cavils of infidels, such as Hume, against the truth, only resemble the foaming waves dashing against the deep rooted rock, which defies their fury, yet they may, perhaps, beat off the poor ship-wrecked mariner, who was about to ascend it in hopes of deliverance from impending destruction.

By means of strong religious principle and resignation many have conquered the fear of death, and no other fear could then reach them. There have been recorded in history instances of martyrs more calmly courageous in danger and suffering, by the power of religion, than the most celebrated warriors. Among a thousand such instances, who can forget the dignified composure, in his last extremity, of Latimer ? Condemned to death for his adherence to divine truth, at the age of eighty, and bent with infirmity, he composedly advanced to the stake. When that aged martyr reached the

scene of his suffering, he threw off his prison dress and stood upright in his shroud, saying to his fellow-sufferer, while the fire was lighted, "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man. We shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as, I trust, shall never be put out." Hooper, too, equally ready to sacrifice his life in the cause of truth and holiness, exclaimed, when a pardon was placed before him, "Away with it, if you love my soul!" What a blessing for us to live in times like these, when all may think, write, and speak on religion, as well as on every other subject, with entire freedom and safety.

Such is the fearless state of Christian courage to which the mind may be brought, by an habitual and prayerful contemplation of death; but it costs a continual effort to retain in our thoughts a distinct impression of the great reality. We daily pass, in the street, the long procession of mourners carrying our deceased contemporaries to their last resting place; and the solemn sight causes but a transient consciousness that our own turn, in this doomed and dying world, must finally come. Of each individual we see around us, it shall hereafter be told in his own neighbourhood, as the news of the day, that he is dead. And we who mourn to-day shall perhaps be mourned for to-morrow; yet how difficult it is to realise the con-

sciousness that it shall be so! If an apparition were permitted sometimes to rise from the grave to warn us, we should at last gaze upon it with much the same matter-of-course feeling now experienced in contemplating a funeral; and, as Bishop Bull remarks, "men become like sextons, who toss up skulls and skeletons every day, but never dream of death."

At a beautiful country residence in Scotland, there are large black marble pillars in the library, decorated with inscriptions to the memory of those deceased members of the family—one a distinguished hero at Waterloo, who lived there formerly, and who once sat by the fireside in that very room; yet the business of life goes on there, while that "writing on the wall" is but occasionally, of course, noticed now or remembered. The late Earl of M——, too, wishing to preserve in his mind a constant and salutary recollection of his latter end, tried the useless expedient of causing his coffin to be placed in his bed-room, where for several years it lay, before he was at length enclosed within its narrow limits; but it would have no more effect, probably, in impressing his mind with the brevity of life, than the clock would have on his chimney-piece.

Dr. Huntingfield, formerly Bishop of Hereford, raised his own tomb-stone over the chimney-piece in his sitting-room, and when his wife died first,

he caused her epitaph to be thus inscribed on it : —
“ Sacred to the Memory of Sarah Huntingfield.”
Then followed his own name, leaving a blank for the day of his death ; but it may be questioned, whether that very solemn memento would long have more effect on the Bishop’s mind than a picture on the wall. A gentleman once put up a handsome stone in a field to serve afterwards as his own grave-stone, but used it, in the mean while, to shoot at for practice ; on observing which, a friend one day said to him, “ You will be sorry to hit that mark ! ”

We see death in our homes, we meet it in the streets, and we walk in the solemn recesses of a burying-ground with as worldly a spirit sometimes as in the gayest scene of festivity. The most humane physicians enter without emotion the darkened chamber of their expiring patients, and graves are opened in our very sight ; but unless the mind be recast into seriousness by the sacred influence of religion, we may read the lesson without learning it by heart, or reducing it to practice.

In the splendidly decorated cemetery of Père la Chaise, and in other ornamental places of interment, visitors give themselves up often to a sort of melancholy gossip, while reading over with passing interest, the short biographies of the dead. The young observe with wonder, that some have

died younger than themselves, the old examine to ascertain how many lived to be older, the man of 90 examines whether many lived to be 100, and the greater part of those loungers flit about from tomb to tomb with little more serious reflection than the butterfly in passing from flower to flower. Few, indeed, are able, distinctly and influentially, to impress upon their own minds that so soon this world shall be nothing to us, nor we to the world; that before long its events will be of even less importance to us than the clouds now flitting over our heads; that its sights and sounds, its affections and feelings, its occupations and pleasures, its hopes and fears, shall belong to others, not to us—that in this life we are on a ceaseless pilgrimage, which stops not for one moment in its march of duty and of suffering, till it ends in eternity.

Such thoughts may at first appear gloomy; but being certainly true, our best wisdom is to encourage them, not merely as the benighted heathens did, with the best intellectual consideration which their fallible wisdom could attain, but with that unerring light and knowledge thrown by Divine Revelation on the darkest recesses of thought. With such a guide to consolation the Christian might be at peace even in the most overwhelming adversity; but were that

support removed, all the possessions of life would become of no more avail than the toys of children to one who had outgrown their use, and who knew that they were lent to him only for a few hours. As Dr. South remarks, these transient objects and trifling acquisitions become as unimportant to the Christian as a bundle of straw to a hungry lion, or a hobby-horse to a minister of state.

It is right, nevertheless, by any innocent means, to soothe that anguish which consumes the soul, when those once dear as our own lives must be hidden from our sight in the grave, though their memory remains to be cherished in the heart while life and feeling exist. Who has not experienced that mixture of sorrow and consolation which visits the heart, when with scalding tears of anguish he contemplates the treasured portrait, the lock of hair, the old letter, or the precious record of some kind saying, or of some generous action, which endears those we lament in the most mournful depths of our grief and affection? The only flower that blooms in our memory over the grave of such departed friends, is the everlasting promise that we shall meet again: the only thought which relieves the sadness of beholding their tomb is to think also of that now empty tomb in which our blessed Saviour once was buried, and from whence he is risen to prepare the many

mansions in which his people are to be everlastingly united.

Like foam on the crest of the billow,
Which sparkles and sinks from the sight,
Like leaf of the wind-shaken willow,
Though transiently, beautifully bright,
Like dew-drops exhaled as they glisten,
Like perfume, which dies soon as shed,
Like melody, hush'd while we listen,
Is Memory's dream of the dead.

BERNARD BARTON.

CHAP. IX.

THE GLOOM OF THIS WORLD RELIEVED BY THE CHEERFUL ANTICIPATION OF A BETTER LIFE TO COME.

One man there was, and many such you might
Have met, who never had a dozen thoughts
In all his life, and never changed their course ;
But told them o'er, each in its custom'd place,
From morn till night, from youth to hoary age.

He lived —
Lived where his father lived, died where he died,
Lived happy, and died happy, and was saved.
Be not surprised — he loved and served his God.

POLLOK.

It is related that in the deepest dungeons of the Inquisition, a wearied prisoner, after long confinement, found his vision at last so accommodated to the surrounding darkness, that he became enabled distinctly to see the objects around him ; but instead of its being a pleasure, he only discovered with loathing and horror that reptiles of the most revolting description were crawling at his feet. After some time, however, his eye was more pleasantly attracted by perceiving a small green plant growing on the wall ; the continual interest that he took in which made him cease to regret the con-

sciousness which had been forced upon him, of the disgusting objects around. While he daily watched with increasing interest the expanding beauty and grace of his favourite little plant, it seemed fitly to represent the cheering influence which is implanted by Christianity in a mind originally haunted by guilty or remorseful thoughts.

From the remotest corner of the prisoner's cell, that fresh green plant directed its stalk so as to catch a narrow chink of light which crept through a crevice in the wall, while towards that struggling beam of sunshine every leaf and every twig was bent for health and sustenance. Thus the Christian, who sees but one source of life or peace, turns to religion with the whole ardour of his being, seeks nourishment from that radiant fountain of light, and would rather forfeit his existence than remain in a state of mental darkness, helplessly beset by his own evil inclinations, and wilfully alienated from his God.

The hymn sung at our Saviour's birth proclaimed "good-will to man," and the first words spoken by the angels to Mary after the resurrection of Christ were these: — "Woman, why weepest thou?" Those, then, who doubt the merciful intentions of our Divine Redeemer, commit a sin that punishes itself, by leaving their minds under a cloud of gloom which it may be their misfortune, as well as their fault, both to live and to die under.

It should be the business of a Christian to have the promises and hopes of the Gospel interwoven with every thought of his existence ; and those who neglect, during the period of life and health, to acquaint themselves fully with the character and office of Christ cannot in death expect his utmost friendship. Those who with reverential confidence and gratitude place their trust in our Saviour can never be disappointed ; for their hope at the last, like a torch reversed, instead of being extinguished, shall burn only the brighter. The dying creed of every Christian might then be expressed in the last words of the exemplary Hooker :—“ I plead not any righteousness of my own, but that my unrighteousness may be pardoned for Christ’s sake.”

As every wish on our parts, to alter any event, however afflicting, must originate in a feeling of opposition to the sovereign wisdom of him who appoints it, and testifies a doubt of that mercy which exists, even though unseen, in all the decrees of God, the Christian must early accustom himself to feel like a sentinel waiting at his post for orders, not to be disputed, but implicitly obeyed with unquestioning submission. Such was Fenelon’s state of mind, when, with tears of natural grief for the loss of his beloved young pupil the Duke of Burgundy, he nevertheless found resignation to say, while standing beside the corpse, in a tone of truthful earnestness, “ All my earthly

happiness lies dead with him ; but if the turning of a straw could bring him back to life, I would not for ten thousand worlds be the one to turn that straw in opposition to the will of God."

In humbler life, a poor woman, some time since, testified a similar spirit of devoted, unquestioning submission to the wisdom and mercy of her Maker. When asked, during her last illness, whether she would rather live or die, her answer was that in truth she had no choice, desiring that the decision should be in the hands of God. "But," inquired her friend, "suppose God should refer it to you?" "Then," she replied, "I would beg that it might be referred back again to God."

In the writings of St. Ambrose he says, "Because we have a good Lord, I neither loathe life nor fear to die." Such is the state of mind most desirable for Christians, because none can tell what the valley of the shadow of death is till he enters there himself; therefore it is sufficient if we be prepared to die obediently, without either impatience or reluctance.

Many are apt, in a moment of irritation, heedlessly to exclaim that they wish themselves dead; but the mere saying so is a sin which makes them the less prepared for so solemn an event, and betrays a spirit that but ill appreciates the awfulness of the transition from one world to another. If these very persons, however, become seriously ill,

they are generally the first to send, in anxious haste, for a physician, and they readily submit, as others do, and as every living man should do, to any remedy, however painful, by which their lives may be prolonged.

“Let us,” says Burke, “preserve all our blandishments in life, and all our consolations in death ; all the blessings of time, and all the hopes of eternity.” The common sensibilities of our nature incline men to live, as well as its strongest instincts. Though the original love of life, wisely implanted in us, be stronger in some minds than in others, it is seldom or never quite extinguished, until the immediate approach of death, when, being of no farther use, the instinctive desire of existence seems often to end. To the surprise of those around, the wish to live vanishes entirely, even from the most worldly minds, when the purposes for which God implanted it there are at an end ; but the love of life especially leaves the Christian, who knows that his faith is about to be swallowed up in sight, and his hope in enjoyment.

It was the melancholy exclamation of an aged man, whose taper of life had long and painfully quivered in the socket, “Every body can die but me!” yet natural as his impatience might be, is it not equally questioning God’s will for the aged to complain of living too long, as in the young to complain of dying too soon? The “for ever” of

this life, at its utmost extent, is but short ; and I was much struck with this lately on hearing an old lady of ninety inadvertently say, "When I was young, *not long ago!*" The world itself, though it outlast us and our generation, cannot last always. When the period is fixed, however distant, at which any future event in our own existence shall occur, how very soon does the circuit of life bring round the long-anticipated day ; for the appointed hour being stationary, we ourselves, by an almost imperceptible progress, go onward until the time is soon and certainly overtaken.

A circumstance became much talked of during 1830, that in the Royal Institution, a bulbous root, still retaining its vitality, was exhibited, recently discovered in the hand of an Egyptian mummy, where it must have existed above 2000 years. Such was its tenaciousness of life, that, on being placed in the ground, the little plant struck a root, and flourished in perfect health, to the surprise of all observers, a strange and unexpected visitor from by-gone ages. If the existence of that mortal Being beside whose remains it had so long been interred could have been as wonderfully prolonged in the active enjoyment of life, yet, amidst the petty interests and the bustling occupations of an earthly career, hours, days, and years, like the minutes unobservedly marked by a

clock in the night, would probably have slipped unheeded away ; and the man of many centuries' duration would still have declared that life is short, and would still perhaps have been found unready for its close, like poor Colonel L—— who complained lately when dying, at the age of ninety-two, that he was cut off in the prime of life.

There is no more to be told in sacred history of Methuselah, and of the other long-lived patriarchs in ancient times, than of our own contemporaries : merely that they were born, and that several hundred years afterwards they died ; but till all is revealed at the day of judgment which relates to individuals, little more is known respecting the many years that they had to live and act on earth, than would be recorded on a modern tombstone ; for most truly is the longest period of man's existence compared to the flight of a weaver's shuttle, or to a tale that is told. Though mankind before the flood were mortal, yet their lives, extending over the greater part of a thousand years, seem to us like immortality itself : and when after the deluge their existence was diminished about one half, still the oldest man of our day seems but a child in comparison, and he who now exceeds the limit of threescore and ten becomes a subject of wonder to himself, as well as to all his short-lived contemporaries. When a friend once complimented Lord Chesterfield on living to

so great an age as eighty, and appearing likely still by the courtesy of death to survive for some time longer, his Lordship hastily interrupted him, saying, "Hush! do not speak so loud! Death has forgotten me!"

Every interest, occupation, or amusement of mankind seems proportioned to the very limited extent of life. In any science to which a philosopher devotes his mind he may learn, in half a lifetime, all that has yet been discovered. If his genius be for languages he may acquire in a few years more than he can ever use. He may read until he find not a thought he has not thought before, nor a fact he does not already know, or he may traverse the round world on which we dwell, and visit every nation on the earth; yet if all these things were accomplished, and an extended grant of life given to him for that purpose, it must nevertheless come speedily to a conclusion, and he would find, as all men do in their most ardently desired enterprises, that it is the pursuit, not the possession of any thing in this life, which gives it rest. What sportsman would care for hunting if the fox always came to meet the hounds, or who would have pleasure in speaking many languages, if they were as easily acquired now as in the tower of Babel?

To the keenest votary of amusement it would be appalling if he were informed, that throughout

eternity he must enjoy no other pursuit than that which he had chosen for himself. Imagine any pleasure of life, conceive an eternity of it, and then become convinced, by the disgust which the mere idea creates, that our natures are in truth intended for something better than the best of this world's enjoyments, for something on which our intellect and affections can be expanded without limit and without end. Birds have their own natural, satisfying portion in the air, and animals on the grass, but man, immortal man, must weary of any portion inconsistent with his high origin and glorious destiny.

We read in the Memoirs of Mademoiselle de L'Espinasse, that she dined out and visited while her heart was so torn with agonising passions, that her thoughts were hourly turned on suicide ; yet she seemed, by her wit and vivacity, the centre of all attraction, and the admired of all admirers. Satiated with all, she nevertheless held levees twice a day around her deathbed, wearied of life, and afraid to die, continuing to the last, like her celebrated and admired contemporary Lydia White, "rouged, and jesting and dying !" How much happier was the fate of a French nobleman, completely *blasé* with the amusements of fashionable life, who once finding the Opera-house so crowded that he could not obtain admission, strolled accidentally into a church, where Massillon was

preaching. There he heard so astonishing a burst of eloquence, and so influential an explanation of life in its duties and responsibilities, that he ever afterwards forsook his former courses, finding a new and better, because an untiring source of enjoyment, in the great realities of Christianity.

Every thing around us, by continually changing, serves as a memento of our own changing condition. The succession of day and night; the ceaseless rising and setting of the sun; the harvests that grow, ripen, and are cut down; the flowers that wither in a day; the clouds that flit past in a moment; the congregations in church that alter year by year; the rivers that lose themselves in the ocean; the insects born but to die, the flitting moon and the falling leaf—all remind us that this world, which is made for us, changes like ourselves, and nothing remains permanent but hope. As face after face disappears, nothing around continues unaltered, but the prospect of that never-ending life purchased for us by our divine Saviour, who took a mortal nature, that we might become immortal, who died that we might live, who came from heaven to teach us the way, and who himself promises to lead us there.

Wickliffe had so deep an impression of our helplessness without the guidance of God's Holy Spirit, and without the propitiation of Christ,

that when present at an argument once, where it was keenly debated whether our own merits might not contribute partly, with those of our Redeemer, to save the soul, he fervently exclaimed in accents of humble supplication, "Heal us gratis, O Lord!"

St. Augustine declared that he had no plea before the Almighty but his own misery and God's mercy—a very different state of mind, and far more to be desired than the vaunting self-sufficiency of that most selfish and unamiable philosopher, Rousseau, who says, in his Confessions, "Let the trumpet of the last judgment sound when it will, I shall present myself before the Sovereign Judge, with this book in my hand, and say aloud, 'Here is what I did, what I thought, and what I was!'"

Truly it is a venerable certainty, that the best of men are ever the most humble. As those most cleanly in their personal habits are the soonest sensible of a stain on their dress, and feel more annoyed by that trifling disfigurement than a sloven in the greatest extreme of filth, so do those who are pure and holy in spirit become painfully sensitive to the slightest defect in their own belief or conduct. It was an interesting remark of a New Zealander, who, after he became a truly pious Christian, said these words: "My conscience was formerly like my hand, which

could carry a stone without much feeling it; but now it has become like my eye, for the least grain of sin makes it give me pain." "Nothing seems important to me," says Cecil, "but in so far as it is connected with religion. The end—the *cui bono*—enters into my view of every thing. Even the highest acts of the intellect become criminal trifling, when they occupy much of the time of a moral creature. If the mind cannot feel and treat mathematics, and music, and all such things as trifles, it has been seduced and enslaved."

Of the many resources which art or intellect can supply to soothe the mind in hours of sorrow, poetry can do even more than music to assuage the severest agitation, as music only arouses our sensibilities by stirring up the depths of our own minds, but poetry brings the sympathy of another, who seems to have felt and suffered like ourselves. When sitting in silence, in darkness, and in unutterable sorrow, watching the broken slumbers of a beloved friend who is soon and certainly to sleep the sleep of death, it is a most blessed resource to call up to recollection all the poetry with which our memory has ever been stored, for it partly estranges the thoughts from present grief, and seems also in a degree to partake of its solemnising nature.

As tunes take hold sometimes of the mind, and

seem to haunt it with even painful pertinacity, so also does poetry ; and on one occasion, of long and mournful watching in solitary anxiety, these verses of Kirke White came thus to the recollection of one about to be left in lonely bereavement, who found them, though not of so peculiarly devotional a character as many of his other poems, a source of composure, which seemed at every repetition of the lines only to increase : —

It is not that my lot is low,
That caus'd these silent tears to flow ;
It is not grief that bids me moan,
It is that I am all alone.

In woods and glens I love to roam,
When the tir'd hedger hies him home ;
Or by the woodland pool to rest,
When pale the star looks on its breast.

Yet when the silent ev'ning sighs,
With hallow'd airs and symphonies,
My spirit takes another tone,
And weeps that it is all alone.

The autumn leaf is sere and dead,
It floats upon the water's bed :
I would not be a leaf to die,
Without recording sorrow's sigh.

The woods and winds, with sullen wail,
Tell all the same unvaried tale :
I've none to smile when I am free,
Or, when I sigh, to sigh with me.

Yet in my dreams a form I view,
That thinks on me, and loves me too —
I start, and when the vision's flown,
I weep that I am all alone.

I knew a lady once of high rank and distinguished talent, who was known to have 2,000 pieces of poetry by heart, some of which she used from time to time to repeat among her family and friends. At the age of eighty-one she told me that finding her memory less retentive, she had determined to throw aside all the secular verses she knew, and entertain her memory only with that which was sacred. She said, that now every month added to her life was a miracle, but she awoke every morning with a delightful consciousness that it was "a benevolent not a malevolent Being" who gave her all she still so much enjoyed.

The chief impressiveness of preaching is derived from the certainty of death — "Whence all human guilt? from death forgot." Though it be, however, the only thing certain upon earth, how apt are we to live as if it were the only thing uncertain! On the most careless mind, however, the idea does force itself occasionally, that a night must come when we shall see no morning, a day in which we are not to witness the setting of the sun; but, at the same time, most wisely and most mercifully has it been ordained that an impression so awful, which might unfit us probably for the

active duties of life, cannot, by any effort of man, be always distinctly retained. We may stamp the impression again and again on our minds; but, like sealing-wax held over the fire, the impression, which we hoped to render indelible, melts off instantaneously in the furnace of worldly occupations. No man need be afraid of its becoming too prominent in his thoughts, for the difficulty is, to fix it there at all, and if we did but reflect that each of us shall continue to be the same being in another state that we have been in this, we could not but make greater efforts to acquire, by the help of Divine grace, a higher and more consistent type of the Christian character than that which we have yet attained to.

Even the Christian, who most wishes in time to prepare, with cool and rational deliberation, for his end, among a thousand urgent calls on his attention, preserves but a shadowy and occasional recollection of "that great teacher, Death." The passing remembrance, as it flits through his mind, might be compared to that which Nebuchadnezzar had of his dream, when he described it, saying, "I saw a vision, but it is gone!" There are, in truth, ideas which the mind of man cannot contain. Thought itself is lost in attempting fully to grasp the conception of death and immortality; yet, though not always present to the recollection, nor ever entirely comprehended, they may

become firmly established in our conviction, as awful certainties, to be believed now and understood hereafter.

The famous hero, Philip de Mornay, Lord Du Plessis, said, with the deepest earnestness, when expiring, "I feel—I feel what I speak! As to faith in the truths of God I am entirely persuaded of them, by the demonstration of God's Holy Spirit, which is more powerful, more clear, and more certain than all the demonstrations of Euclid."

When six days of labour, each other succeeding,
With hurry and toil have my spirit oppress'd,
What pleasure to think, as the last is receding,
To-morrow will be a sweet sabbath of rest.

And when the vain shadows of time are retiring,
When life is fast fleeting, and death is in sight,
The Christian believing, exulting, expiring,
Beholds a "to-morrow" of endless delight.

WATTS.

CHAP. X.

THE RETROSPECT OF LIFE IN ADVANCING YEARS.

Friend after friend departs :
Who hath not lost a friend ?
There is no union here of hearts
That finds not here an end :
Were this frail world our only rest,
Living or dying, none were blest.

There is a world above,
Where parting is unknown ;
A whole eternity of love,
Form'd for the good alone ;
And faith beholds the dying here,
Translated to that happier sphere.

MONTGOMERY.

If men were all permitted to linger in this world until perfectly fitted for a better, how very long the lives of some would be ; but certainly it often seems as if the best are soonest called away, and those allowed to stay longest behind who remain unprepared. Though tried with adversities, blessed with mercies, alarmed with judgments, and melted with sorrows, they still continue the same, unchastened by discipline, ungrateful for benefits, and unimproved amidst a thousand means

of grace; yet still they are spared, the axe is not laid to the root of the tree, and the invitations of mercy are not withdrawn.

Even those who struggle in earnest to become consistent Christians, must, nevertheless, be a daily and hourly wonder to themselves; with a deep conviction that nothing on earth is really worth a serious thought but religion, that to have more holiness would be better than health, wealth, and all the pleasures of this world—that the awful hour is on the wing when every visible scene must be left, and that there really is nothing to desire with any anxiety but God's peculiar favour; still our feelings and hopes have a continual tendency to become prostrated on earthly objects. The Christian can truly declare, that if a supernatural revelation were made, promising him the fulfilment of whatever wish he might select, his first, last, and only request, without hesitating the fraction of a moment, would be, that he might become gifted with faith as a sacred talisman against all temptation, and that he might become perfectly holy in heart and life. The desire to be so, however, lies cold and inanimate as a stone on the mind, until the Spirit of God awaken it to activity, and add also the gift of vigour to persevere in every prescribed means of advancement towards holiness, for it is of little avail to sit at the bottom of a hill and wish your-

self on the summit, unless you be able and willing to struggle up the steep ascent.

Though each living individual knows and acknowledges that he, and the whole race of mankind around him, are but "the wandering nation of a summer's day," and that our journey through this world, as well as out of this world, must soon draw to a close; yet the longer men mingle in this earthly scene, to act their parts in the great drama of life, the more are they accustomed to belong to its business, the more does it appear an habitual home, and the more averse do men generally become to leave so well-known an abode. Therefore the young not having struck so deep a root in the earth are, commonly, more ready and more willing to believe that they are dying than the old. Perhaps, having experienced nothing but youthful enjoyment, they can better imagine a state of perfect happiness than others do after a lifetime of suffering.

A pleasing exception to this rule appeared, however, in the closing scene of Dr. Andrew Hunter, venerable in years, and still more venerable in character. He had long enjoyed the paradise within his own mind of a good conscience, and his last words were these:—"What a pleasing prospect to a Christian, that he is going home! To die is to go home indeed: to be with Christ for ever! I die in the firm belief of the certainty and

importance of the everlasting truths which I have declared to others."

Till death actually meets us we are prone to forget that the end of life is not, like the horizon, receding as we advance, but that each day and hour brings us inevitably nearer to that fixed and immovable period, when the strongest battlements of our nature must give way, when, for us, time shall be no more, and when the curtain must irresistibly drop between us and all in this world which bewilders and fascinates the human mind. Some mode or other of passing from this world to another must of necessity have been appointed, and the one decreed is death. The summons awaits us, and any day may be our last, or rather, to the waiting Christian, his first — first in the enjoyment of heavenly glory ; and such a thought is to him a sufficient antidote to fretting or grieving over the events of our transitory life.

As one by one thy hopes depart
Be resolute and calm.

The different spirit in which men meet the same event is singular ; and there was a curious mixture of ill-timed boldness, which none will envy, and misplaced eccentricity, which few can admire, in the last scene of Frederick-William, King of Prussia. When his end was evidently near, he caused himself to be placed in a wheeled chair, and drawn

to the Queen's room, desiring her to rise and see him die. He then bid farewell to his children, giving some sensible advice to his successor. He ordered all the servants to put on their new liveries, and then looked at them with an air of derision, exclaiming, "Vanity of vanities!" He ordered his physician to declare how long he was likely to live, and when told about half an hour, he sent for a looking-glass, remarking, with a smile, that he did look ill enough, and added, "*Qu'il ferait une vilaine grimace en mourant,*" and he sent away all the clergymen present, saying, "he knew already all they had to say!"

"As the last day of our life leaves us," says St. Augustine, in a tone of salutary warning, "so shall the day of doom find us." However heart-crushing and appalling the idea may seem of being finally blotted from this earth, yet few men fear to be dead. What they chiefly apprehend is the stroke of death, though that which shall follow should be the great object of solicitude; and we are purposely left in ignorance of the period when death shall come, that each hour may find the Christian ready. As the more he meditates on death, the less he fears the mere departure from this world; who would not desire to make that a voluntary act which is, in truth, an inevitable one, by awaiting in well-ordered readiness the summons which shall come, whether expected or not, to every suc-

cessive individual born to the same destiny of certain death?

Former generations have vanished away, like snow upon the sea, to make room for us; and we in turn, like those who have partaken of a banquet, and enjoyed our share, must make room for others, who have an equal right to take their own places. We are now the losers, and must soon become the lost; we weep to-day for others, and to-morrow we shall be wept for, seeing that every friendship formed between mortals must involve a certainty that one shall sooner or later mourn for the other. Every additional day that the complicated machine of our bodies may continue in existence should be more a subject of surprise than that an hour comes at last in which it expires. None are exempted who have once taken our nature, not even our Divine Saviour himself when he became a "Son of man," that title by which he condescended to distinguish himself before his resurrection though never again afterwards.

Could a physician undertake to keep men alive for ever, he might probably obtain many patients; but it would be one of the most miserable of privileges to any man, if he might turn the sandglass of life and live as long as he pleased. Who can desire to remain on earth after all those he loved are vanished, when the best part of himself, his affections, are already in heaven, and when he be-

lieves himself to be expected there by a numerous assembly of Christian friends, by a merciful Saviour, and by a pardoning God? As an old Dutch author remarks, "That man is a sorry wight who desires to live beyond threescore; as for my part, after that age, I would gladly take the first opportunity to die."

The Christian rejoices, when young, in the many ties of affection by which his home is embellished, and well he may, for then his attachments are fresh and healthful as the morning air at sunrise. If these associations once begin to break up, each, when dissevered, seems dearer than the last; till at length the long-travelled pilgrim, having become almost solitary, learns, in the desolation of feelings strong and immortal as the soul itself, the full meaning of these words, "A wounded spirit who can bear!" When young, the Christian set out in life, perhaps, attended by parents in whose eyes he could scarcely do wrong, and when they departed, the pang of grief was one never to be forgotten. He saw himself still, probably, surrounded by brothers and sisters who understood every thought of his heart, by friends and contemporaries who belonged to his own generation, and even yet the world seemed to him an almost crowded home. Gradually his friends were all disbanded by death, as one by one they dropped off. The universe itself now seems to him almost empty, while men

of a new generation have become heirs of the world instead of those among whom he was originally enrolled ; and the old man feels like an uninvited guest, or a perfect stranger, amidst those with whose affairs he has comparatively little connection.

In extreme old age men become like spectators at a theatre, inactively seated to behold the business of the stage, but with no part to act on their own account in a scene wherein their personal affairs are all transacted and done. They may silently witness the mistakes or the misfortunes of those in whom they feel the deepest interest, but any interference is received with jealous distrust ; therefore over the events at which they rejoice or mourn they can exercise little control, except by the prayers which a Christian may, to his latest breath, solace and occupy his mind by offering up for those he loves. How wisely and well is this forcible alienation from worldly interests ordered, to estrange us from those scenes of dreary vacancy so soon to be forsaken.

When kind faces become scarce, when voices dear to our memory must never more sound in our ears, when the wind sighs through the grass waving over those we loved the best, then indeed our affections travel onward and die to this world, while following those departed so long before, that they seem now like the images in a long-remembered dream. "Gone — glimmering through the

dream of things that were." It was but lately that these thoughts were impressed anew on my mind, when visiting an aged friend, who was seated alone in her splendid drawing-room, surrounded by the marble busts of three deceased children and the portrait of her late husband; but no object of living interest stood there to make her for a moment forget those silent memorials, or the happy days when she, and when I remembered them all smiling around her in their once cheerful home. Religion had then been the best of her blessings, but now it was the only one left, and yet she did not repine. If the decay of happiness and of hope were as distinctly marked on men's external aspect as their bodily infirmities, how sad an aspect would society often present! Few probably could with truth have the epitaph placed over their tombs which I read lately in the church-yard at Bradford over an old man of seventy-five, "The end of his peaceful life was an evening without a cloud."

Old age doth give, by too long space,
Our souls as many wrinkles as our face.

The words of Franklin, written in his 82d year, display the mind of a philosopher, who, though great in learning and science, looked upon life as little better than a broken toy. He speaks as follows:—"I am grown so old, as to have buried most of the friends of my youth, and I now often

hear persons, whom I knew as children called 'old Mr. Such-a-one' to distinguish them from their sons, now men grown and in business; so that by living twelve years beyond David's period, I seem to have intruded myself into the company of posterity, when I ought to have been in bed and asleep — I look upon death to be as necessary to our constitution as sleep. We shall rise refreshed in the morning."

An old man like Franklin would, in his days, be probably venerated for the knowledge and experience he had acquired, as well as courted for what he could impart. Even though his great abilities were somewhat impaired, the mere frame would be revered for what it once contained; but the time is now passed, when the old man, the relic of a by-gone generation, was looked up to as the sole depository of ancient family traditions, who could describe, like no other, the character, appearance, and history, of his contemporaries. During former years, an aged patriarch was, among younger men, the only echo of the past; but now, all that is interesting on such subjects can be found in biographies, magazines, newspapers, letters, portraits, and prints. The old man's tales are superseded, and become eventually an intrusion on the attention of younger and busier minds, which are naturally astonished to see a person always looking backwards, while they, on the contrary, look constantly forwards.

How often, in the early morning, we observe the long shadows, stretched far out before us: as noon approaches they vanish almost entirely; but in the evening, they are again seen lengthening behind—and thus it is with the memory. In the dawn of life we look entirely to the future; in middle age both past and future are swallowed up in the present; and, perhaps, in respect to this world the shadowless period of middle age may be considered the happiest, when the fervent eagerness of youth is subdued, and the infirmities of age not yet begun. There can be no doubt, that scarcely ever is there a day or an hour of existence, which is not perfectly bearable or even to be enjoyed, if it were cut off from all anticipation of future evil, and from all retrospection of past felicity; and thus in middle age, the shadows of the past and future seem nearly to vanish amidst present occupations; but in old age memory takes the place of hope, and he who, standing on the outer edge of life, looks around in vain for the companions of his youth, feels that, since for him there is, in this world, no future, it has become time to follow.

The Christian would not spare himself a sorrow of his past life, seeing that, however it jarred with agony at the time, each was so necessary as to have turned out in the end but a blessing in disguise; yet longing now to be at rest, he would

little desire, by attaining a greater age, to incur the threat of Jeremiah to Jehoiakim—"There shall be none to make lamentation for thee."

How mistakenly is it sometimes asserted that the young have more feeling than the old! They evince more emotion certainly; for, like the broad but shallow river that sparkles gladly beneath the sunshine, and ripples noisily under the shade, their feelings display every trifling variation on the surface. Children are full of laughter or tears long before they have attained any real sensibility; but the deep-worn channel that years have matured cannot be reached by the passing breeze, flowing on unknown and unnoticed, till it reaches the end to which, by the wisdom of God, it is destined. The young can little imagine how acutely some trifling accident often recalls to the aged a whole flood of recollections. A note of music brings back, perhaps, to the mental vision a whole household of friendly faces now in the grave. A passing expression of regard restores for one instant the image of those whose affection formerly no words could have expressed; or the joyous gambols of childhood send his thoughts back, along the stream of time, to the period when he, too, was light-hearted and hopeful, as the youngest and happiest, before grief had scathed and blasted the gay visions of his early days.

The old man must live out his latter years

among those to whom his former achievements are indifferent, by whom his best intentions are perhaps misunderstood, and to whom his early struggles of principle and triumphs of rectitude are unknown. Age, then, may well calm all excited feelings, and moderate the inordinate wishes of one whose own descendants are become strangers to him. When few or none survive, to whom the aged Christian's joy or sorrow, his success or failure, are objects of solicitude, then also his own interest in both becomes gradually extinguished.

Even the curiosity respecting a man's affairs, of those who dislike him, and the envy of his rivals, add something to the importance of life; but when the hatred as well as the love of others is extinct, prosperity ceases to be so intensely interesting, or to give that rapturous delight which the young not only feel themselves, but see redoubled, because reflected in the eyes of those they love; and even adversity itself loses the sharpness of its sting. To the buried friend our lot remains always as it was when he left us, and to him, kind as he once was, the joys or sorrows of our hearts are no more now, than the blast that sweeps over his grave. Most true is the remark that nothing can be so sad as the prosperity which comes too late. How beautiful and how mournfully truthful was the answer of Dr. Johnson to Lord Chester-

field, when his Lordship at last sent to that great and good man the long-withheld offer of his patronage!—"Had your notice been early, it had been kind, but it comes when I am old and cannot enjoy it, when I am solitary and cannot impart it, when I am known and do not want it."

Strange to think how much may be thought and felt in secret by those beside whom we are placed in the closest contact of intercourse and conversation without our perhaps penetrating at all into the real arcana of their minds; for a man can no more guess sometimes what are the real feelings of his most confidential friend, than a traveller could tell what was in his neighbour's portmanteau. Not a conjecture perhaps occurs to our minds in society, that beneath the glance apparently fixed in the present scene may lurk a thousand vagrant thoughts and consuming anxieties. The heart of the young is engrossed probably by a brilliant futurity, unconnected with any of the scenes around, while the old man's memory has gone back to recall the sacred forms of those long departed, whose very names, dear and familiar to his youthful associations, belong now to those gaily grouped around him, the children or grandchildren of the friends who started with him in the race of life. The features and expression of many a smiling young face then raise emotions, of which the persons themselves are totally un-

conscious, but their looks and words bring to mind the countenances of those whose affection was once the most precious of earthly treasures, the most cheering of earthly delights. I knew once an aged and most exemplary Christian, whose chief remaining pleasure in this world, after she attained the age of 80, was to sit alone in her flower garden every summer evening, and to read over and over again the letters she had received in early youth from her own mother. They reminded her sadly, yet pleasingly, of the days when she had been loved in her happy childhood, with that partial and tender affection which clings to the memory, and sinks into the heart for ever. Well is it for a mother and daughter, whose letters have been such as thus to remain always the precious pledges of their past attachment on earth, and of their future re-union in heaven.

The sigh was fondly true — o'er memory came,
In many a crowding thought, the childish game ;
The busy eve that deck'd them for the ball,
The plans, the hopes, the joys — now mournful all.

WILLIS.

CHAP. XI.

THE CHRISTIAN'S REVERENTIAL ATTACHMENT TO THE
BIBLE.

Grief taught my tears awhile to flow,
But saved me from eternal woe. COWPER.

THE late Lord Sidmouth remarked, in the afternoon of his life, how much he was struck by the disproportion between man's ambition and the shortness of his existence. A sense of want continually rankles in the human soul; and it is that sense which originates in our minds the conviction how necessary and indispensable religion is, to satisfy the insatiable craving of our nature for greater happiness and for longer existence. Even in our most joyful hours we are still haunted by a lurking consciousness how transient they are; but how much more irresistible is our desire for comfort in sorrow, and, most of all, for support in death—for help in that hour when nothing remains to us, unless it be a peaceful conscience! The object of religion is to produce a union between God and his creatures, which sin has interrupted; and those only have peace in such an hour who have employed their vanished moments in seeking that

divinely-taught wisdom which shall fit them for a blessed eternity in the presence of God.

Peter the Great, before his death, remarked, that "he who forgets God works without profit, and will never obtain the blessing of heaven." And, truly, it is a useless labour to build on any tree of an earthly growth, when God has doomed the whole forest to destruction, so that every branch on which a home could be established shall soon be cut down. The Christian, thus driven from one resting-place to another, finds the only safe and permanent refuge in the never-withering tree of life, whence, though the body be for a time consigned to earth, the soul shall wing its way to heaven. At the same time, it ought always to be remembered that Christianity is not only a religion of many pleasing anticipations, but also of many active duties. We may perceive in the narrative of Holy Scripture that Christ scarcely ever performed a miraculous cure, without immediately enjoining some action of energetic obedience. When the blind man was cured he received orders to wash in the pool of Siloam, the lepers were commanded to show themselves to the priest, the woman detected in guilt was admonished to "go and sin no more," and St. Paul when shipwrecked had to exert himself vigorously for his own preservation. Whether, therefore, we sail towards eternity in tempest or in calm, is decreed accord-

ing to the will of God ; and yet that does not in the slightest degree exonerate us from making the most zealous efforts for our own safety, neither desparing in discontented indolence, nor allowing spiritual pride to make us too confident.

There have been few more pious, eminent, and humble Christians than Bishop Butler, who had learning enough to make six ordinary philosophers, and self-denial enough for the most rigid of anchorites. When his steward incidentally mentioned one day that he had 500*l.* in reserve of the good bishop's income, his lordship exclaimed, "What ! 500*l.* lying idle in a bishop's house ; it is a shame, bring me a list of poor persons that we may distribute it." With all his indifference and superiority to the world, however, he entertained an undeviating conviction that, personally, he could deserve nothing of God : and one day he made this remark to his chaplain, Dr. Foster, "I was thinking what an awful thing it is for a human being to stand before the great moral Governor of the world, to give an account of all his actions in this life."

If Butler, whose conscience had always feared the smallest sin, though ready to face the greatest dangers, had such an apprehension, what should more careless Christians feel ! On his death-bed, when Dr. Foster read to him the third chapter of St. John, the Bishop stopped him at the sixteenth

verse, requesting to hear it repeated a second time, when he said with deep solemnity, "I never before felt those words to be so satisfactory and consolatory—'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'"

The affectionate confidence with which a dying Christian clings at the last, as Bishop Butler did to his Bible, is most deeply touching; and to that most learned and talented of men it said the same as to any old woman in her cottage, whose simple faith has led her to Christ for salvation. Even when the feeble hand no longer can hold the sacred volume, and the dim eye has ceased to trace its pages, the failing memory still supplies broken fragments sometimes, of a favourite passage, the few well-remembered words of which act as a balm to the sinking spirit.

Most impressive is it to the mourning circle around, when they behold the kindling eye with which a Christian, in his expiring moments, gazes occasionally on the well-remembered volume, so long the companion of his most sacred hours—of the only hours on which he can now look back with unalloyed satisfaction. When the kind friend who smooths his pillow repeats some text, long a venerated source of comfort, how does the fainting spirit revive, and the dim eye brighten for a moment, to re-echo those much loved words;

how earnestly does the soul, hovering between both worlds, grasp at the only link that unites them!

A solemn and very striking incident occurred in modern times, when the tomb of the Emperor Charlemagne being opened, his skeleton was discovered seated on a throne in royal robes, with the kingly crown on his fleshless brow, and the Gospels on his knee! Somewhat similar must have been the spectacle very recently, when an aged Christian was found dead in his study with an open Bible beside him, on which his fore-finger pointed out these words: "Though the just be prevented with death, yet shall he be in rest." Luther declared he would not take the whole world for one leaf of his Bible; and how mercifully is that inestimable gift bestowed on those who know how to value it, as freely as the light of the sun or the air we breathe.

The lines inscribed by Lord Byron on the blank leaf of a Bible testify the existence occasionally of thoughts and feelings in his mind, such as it would have been well for himself and his readers if he had more faithfully cultivated and more frequently expressed; but he who could speak at times in language and feelings so far above the ordinary reach of man, yet delighted perversely to baffle his better nature and disappoint the hopes of all who admired his genius,

while they lamented the profligacy of his habits. It is recorded how deeply Byron was affected on being told that he had been fervently prayed for in the dying hours of Mrs. Sheppard, a deceased clergyman's wife, who, never having seen him, had become touched by the beauty of his writings. These lines show how capable he was of thoughts and feelings such as the Christian could have delighted to honour.

Within this sacred volume lies
The mystery of mysteries;
Happiest they of human race
To whom our God hath given grace,
To read, to mark, to think, to pray,
To know the right, to learn the way;
But better they had ne'er been born,
Who read to doubt, or read to scorn.—

In speaking of Mrs. Sheppard's prayer for him, Byron says, "All the fame that ever cheated humanity into higher notions of its own importance, would never weigh in my mind against the pure and pious interest which a virtuous being may be pleased to take in my welfare. In this point of view I would not exchange the prayer of the deceased in my behalf, for the united glory of Homer, Cæsar, and Napoleon, could such be accumulated on a living head!" So great is the benefit that Christians may confer on each other by intercession!

How mournful to contemplate the final wreck of such emotions and of such a mind, as described by Dr. Millingen, who attended Byron in his last illness, and to whom he said these words, "Do you suppose that I wish for life? I have grown heartily sick of it, and shall welcome the hour I depart. Why should I regret it? Can it afford me any pleasure? Have I not enjoyed it to a surfeit? Few men can live faster than I did. I am, literally speaking, a young old man. Hardly arrived at manhood, I had attained the zenith of fame. Pleasure I have known under every form in which it can present itself to mortals. I have travelled, satisfied my curiosity, lost every illusion; I have exhausted all the nectar contained in the cup of life, it is time to throw the dregs away."

The physician adds this melancholy paragraph: — "It is with infinite regret I must state, that although I seldom left Lord Byron's pillow during the latter part of his illness, I did not hear him make any, even the smallest, mention of religion. At one moment I heard him say to himself, 'Shall I sue for mercy?' After a long pause he added, 'Come, come! no weakness! let's be a man to the last.'"

All that was hated, and all that was dear,
All that was hop'd, and all that was fear'd, by man,
He toss'd about, as tempest-wither'd leaves,
Then, smiling, look'd upon the wreck he made.

When children are about for the first time to leave their home and have a promise given them of new delights and of greater happiness in a place they have never seen, with what implicit belief do they listen to the description, and with what alacrity do they prepare to remove; and were all men as fully persuaded that more happiness awaits them in another world than in this, how impatient would many be to depart: but most people shutting their eyes to future certainties, live out their days in an unreal existence of worldly hopes or of worldly fears, created by their own imaginations, and, "full of this life's futurities, expire!"

St. Augustine thought that the punishment of men who loved life too well would consist in having "fruitless desires and hankerings after this world in the next—a mixed torment of desire and despair." If men were promised that every wish they ever formed on earth should hereafter be gratified, that every brilliant castle-in-the-air they ever imagined shall be fully realised, how impatiently would each human being long for the time when he was to enter on the unlimited enjoyment of all he now desires, and how unwilling would he be to suppose that it should ever come to an end—yet how soon and how certainly he would tire of every successive plan! Strange, and in many instances

unworthy of a rational nature, would be the choice made by some, if allowed thus to dictate their favourite plan of future felicity; and it would be a curious question for each person to ask himself, what he has ever yet experienced or imagined that he would choose as the source of his own unending happiness. There is weariness in the very thought, for every enjoyment of man is marked by his own transitory nature; therefore would not the Christian still prefer, for time and eternity, to place his trust in that divine promise made by him who created us, who desires our happiness, and who best knows how it can be secured? "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things that God hath prepared for those that love him."

When Lady Anne Elcho, after a life of Christian enjoyment and of diligent preparation, was in the very act of death, she said, "I would not come back to a vain world for millions, triples of millions." Thus a Christian, knowing on his deathbed that all his days are past, his interests, pleasures, and affections ended, is enabled to advance through the dark portals of the tomb, looking calmly beyond, with a sure and certain prospect of blessedness far exceeding all he has yet experienced; while he reaches forward with earnest desire to so glorious a futurity that even

death itself cannot extinguish the ardour of his anticipations—

A mortal paleness on his cheek,
But glory in his soul.

Many years ago, when a most amiable, exemplary, and talented Christian was in the last stage of suffering and decay, she received a visit from a young relative enjoying health, beauty, fortune, and every prospect in life which could render it attractive. To many, deeply interested in both, the contrast in their circumstances was very touching, and the interview became too solemn ever afterwards to be forgotten. When it was concluded that blooming young girl, who never before had the sorrow of witnessing a death-bed, and felt strongly impressed by the power of religion—so entirely to conquer bodily anguish and mental suffering—turned to those who accompanied her out of the room, and said, in a voice of heartfelt earnestness, “If I might, at this moment, take the place of any person now on earth, there lies the only one living with whom I should wish to exchange.”

As the sin of Adam locked the gate of mercy against the whole human race, the merit of Christ has opened it wide to receive the penitent sinner; and in this consolatory belief, the most timid of mortals, haunted all their lives, as some persons

are, by the apprehension of death, have testified a well-founded courage and composure at the last, being enabled calmly and confidently to approach the grave, which is to every mortal the gate of heaven or of hell.

In the published account of the late pious and excellent Lady Seaforth, the overwhelming awe and apprehension with which, throughout the greater part of her life, she thought of death, seems to those who do not sufficiently allow for natural temperament almost unaccountable in so eminent a Christian; yet every feeling of sympathy and regret is relieved by learning, that in her last sickness, by the grace of God, all fear was entirely removed, and she died in a state of the most pleasing tranquillity. An interesting circumstance occurred lately in the family of Dr. — which peculiarly illustrates the peace generally awarded to Christians in the hour of danger. His exemplary wife, Mrs. —, being suddenly seized with a very dangerous illness, became restlessly anxious respecting various domestic cares connected with the management of their very numerous family. Having been so unexpectedly laid aside from many important duties, her solicitude on these subjects destroyed sleep, and visibly retarded her recovery. At length Mrs. —'s case having become apparently hopeless, the doctors thought it necessary to declare that

their skill could no longer avail, and that she was entirely given over. On being informed of this very solemn announcement, the mind of Mrs. — became instantly so becalmed respecting every earthly concern, that the consequence was a degree of Christian composure which led to her immediate recovery, and she now lives to glorify God in that world which at his decree she had been so ready to leave.

Even a Christian may borrow wisdom from a heathen philosopher, and learn from the example of Seneca, who says—“When I was a young man, my care was how to live well; since age came on, my care has been how to die well.” It certainly is the most important of duties to do so; but while pagan teachers declare that the life of a wise man should be a continual meditation on death, the Christian preacher has greatly the advantage in recommending a continual meditation on that better life which is to follow.

A pious Christian, now enjoying the fruition of all her hopes in another world, used to tell a near and beloved relative that she could not sleep at night sometimes, for the joy she felt in anticipating the glories of eternity. This will be easily understood, as well as believed, by those who frequently extend their own contemplations beyond the present life; and it is very interesting to observe how cheerfully Christians in former

days seem to have lived in a continual farewell to this world, finding, at the same time, ceaseless encouragement in meditating on the resurrection of our exalted Redeemer. To know, as we do, that his grave is already empty, and that ours shall also be deserted, when we rise to meet him, is the comfort of all comforts. If the sleep of death were followed by no such awakening, then, indeed, we should weep in hopeless sorrow for ourselves and for all who now lie in the dark trance of the tomb; but, as the heathens used to weep when a child was born, and to sing hymns of joy when a man expired, such also might be the mind of a Christian—so to live that “smiling thou shalt die—when all around thee weep.”

Christ came to share with us the sorrow which our own sins have created, and to conquer the enemy who first tempted man to betray himself into ruin. That battle has already been fought for us by our Divine Champion and Saviour. The victory is won; and now, if we look to the cross, following in our Master's footsteps, our passage through the long dark valley becomes gradually irradiated with the brightness of a better world. We learn at last to consider death as the mere parenthesis between the two states of time and eternity, while perfectly assured that we, and all who have preceded us in our Christian course,

shall hereafter arise to glory, leaving our sins with our earthly vesture in the grave.

In comparison with such a prospect, how grovelling and unsatisfactory do the enticements of this world appear! how insignificant its adversities, how impotent its mortifications, how utterly insignificant even its hostility, and how like a distant spectator of terrestrial objects may the Christian feel himself! It is recorded that Grainger, author of the Biographical Dictionary, a devout and holy minister of God, after having, with a mind thus prepared, preached and read prayers in church on the Sunday after Easter, was seized with apoplexy at the communion table, and died in a few hours; on which occasion the following lines were written:—

More happy end what saint e'er knew!
To whom like mercy shown!
His Saviour's death in rapturous view,
And unperceived his own.

CHAP. XII.

THE RECOGNITION OF FRIENDS IN ANOTHER WORLD.

Oh, breathes there one that hath not known
The parting word—the dying look—
While in the soul grief walk'd alone,
And every pulse with anguish shook ;
Some cherish'd one that bless'd him there,
And pass'd—like sunlight from the shore—
Woe! woe! the lov'd—the young—the fair—
They are no more !

The music of their lips hath fled,
Their grace and beauty pass'd away,
Yet lives the presence of the dead
Within our souls, as light in day ;
A fresher light shall burst the tomb,
And all the blessed lost restore :
Unknown those words of wail and gloom—
They are no more.

As every sorrow that befalls us is permitted but in order to produce a higher good, those only need mourn without measure who mourn without hope; but to the Christian there is a certainty, that whatever he thinks of his afflictions now, he shall see their use hereafter. We read in the book of Revelation that “murmurers and complainers”

are peculiarly censured ; for as well might an ignorant passenger on shipboard, who never saw a compass, attempt to direct the pilot how he should steer the vessel safely into port, as the Christian to dictate how he shall be guided through the shoals and tempests of this life into the haven of rest, prepared for God's own people, not to be enjoyed here, but hereafter.

When our Almighty Creator at last re-unites in heaven those ties of friendship which on earth he divided, how joyful will be the recognition of those who once loved and lost each other on earth ! In circumstances the most ennobling, to find themselves at once restored to each other's society, and to behold the glorified forms of those, always so dear to memory, now released from all sorrow — permitted to look back with us on the griefs we shared together, and rejoicing with us at last that no discipline was spared to fit the soul for felicity so pure and so endless.

Bishop Bedell said, when about to expire, " I have finished my ministry and life together. I have kept the faith, and am persuaded that Jesus Christ is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day."

It was a pleasing earnest of mercy to man, that the first in this world who died was righteous Abel ; yet his death being caused by the sin of his brother, forms at the same time a fearful exempli-

fication how guilty our nature had become, and with what violence that warfare then began, which should ever afterwards exist upon earth, between good and evil. The first human soul which entered the presence of its Maker after the fall was hurried there by the depravity of man, but redeemed also by the propitiation of Christ, as the first fruits of his promised advent.

Though many will not hear of death, all must meet it; and to reject every anticipation of that event levels us with mere animals, who have no power to foresee their end, and whose consciousness when it comes is limited to the bodily pangs of the moment. Who can wonder that, when the mind of Colonel Gardiner was first awakened to the consideration of his own aggravated sins and solemn responsibilities, amidst the horrors of a conscience, which had not yet found a hope of pardon, he envied the dog at his feet? — because to a mere animal death is extinction, but man, however he may debase himself, cannot escape the responsibility of his own superior nature.

The language and feeling of Robert Burns on this subject, possessing as he did, in respect to genius and talent, one of the most gifted minds which mere nature ever could boast of, and placing no curb on the indulgence of his own undisciplined inclinations, may be quoted as an instance, how very little fame, genius, sensibility, and un-

bridled licentiousness can satisfy the cravings of an immortal spirit. He used to say, that the only two creatures to be envied were, a horse in his wild state traversing the forest, and an oyster on some desert shore—the one having no wish he did not enjoy, the other neither wish nor fear. Burns afterwards describes himself thus:—“The sport, the miserable victim of rebellious pride, hypochondriacal imagination, agonising sensibility, and bedlam passions. Come, stubborn pride, and unshrinking resolution,” he adds, “accompany me through this, to me, miserable world.”

In such a mood, he declared that his own model of fortitude, of dauntless magnanimity, and of noble indifference to hardship, was Milton’s Lucifer, of whom it has often been thought that the poet’s description is almost too favourable—

A mind not to be chang’d by place or time.

Sin is, like bodily sickness, rendered incurable by being neglected, till it gain too great a head; therefore the Christian may be grateful that, in his own case, whatever he values more than seems for his good is usually the first blessing he loses, and whatever he grasps too eagerly does but wither in his hand. This may be constantly observed through life in every thing, whether we instance it from the schoolboy who crushes a *butterfly* by snatching it too hastily up, or by the

“ vaulting ambition which overleaps itself, and falls on t’other side”—the rule is almost without exception in all things, great or small, that those who are over-anxious to gain any object—to be in health, to be rich, to be popular, to be agreeable, amusing, or admired—all miss their aim; and in every pursuit, the excessive desire of success leads to failure, except in respect to those eternal things for which no human being can too eagerly seek. The man of science or of business, as much as the man of pleasure, exhausts himself in excessive keenness to overtake his own wishes; and it is well that they should sometimes be set aside from their too engrossing pursuits, even though it be by sickness or affliction, provided only it force each individual for a time to remember that he has a soul. If a house be on fire, or a ship going to the bottom, what sleeper will complain if a friend seem rough in awakening him to a sense of his danger? and the greatest sorrows of this life are but as the first droppings from the shower of God’s wrath, that shall hereafter fall on the head of every unrepentant sinner. It is well, then, if they be duly attended to.

We read that in the boat with St. Paul the mariners, when a storm arose, though heathens, called aloud to God for help. Even Volney, the infidel author, when about to be shipwrecked, fell on his knees in an agony of supplication, terrified

into his senses at the near aspect of death; and though he, unfortunately for himself, so soon forgot his own instinctive conviction of God's existence, those who witnessed his abject fear and fervent prayers never did. When many a billow is rushing over our heads, and many a blast shaking our shattered bark, then we are taught to seek leisure and inclination for attending to what our own consciences are ready to say concerning a world to come. It is an awful truth, testifying the wretchedness of infidelity; that both the President and Secretary of the Tom Paine Club shot themselves, thus committing a suicide of the soul as well as of the body. We see, then, that health of soul is better with a distempered body, than health of body with a disordered soul; and who can doubt the truth of that old proverb, "Better to meet a frowning friend, than a smiling enemy?"

Let every Christian endeavour so to end his days as not to be ashamed of having lived, nor afraid to depart, that he may feel at the last such confidence as was expressed in the expiring words of Klopstock, when he said, with a look of heavenly composure, "'Can a woman forget her infant child? Yes! she may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold I have graven thee on the palms of my hands!' Yes, we are all graven upon the hands of God."

It is indeed a solemn act to die; but some devout

Christians, who did not idly loiter over their work of preparation, have at last experienced, in the language of Solomon, that "the day of death is better than the day of our birth;" and that whatever events best prepared them to think so, however agonising at the time, were entitled to a welcome if divinely appointed for their good. Manasseh never wrote his admirable prayer until he was in iron fetters, the gaoler at Philippi was awoken by nothing short of an earthquake, and the prodigal son would never have returned to his father's house if he had prospered.

Those who have set out in earnest on a Christian course must not attempt to go on towards heaven at a sauntering, easy, self-indulgent pace, as if indifferent whether they ever reach it or not. Reading, prayer, and all other means of improvement, must be zealously adopted, though, unless accompanied by heartfelt love to God, abhorrence of evil, indifference to the world, and an earnest desire to be fitted for heaven, they are but the ladder on which we are to rise, not the temple of which Christians are to form a part. It would be far easier than it is, to gain an entrance into everlasting happiness, if the mere saying of prayers, the reading of Scripture, and attending church were sufficient; but though all these are necessary, who does not know them to be inadequate to that great end. The bending of a

bow is not sufficient until the arrow be shot, and our task is not completed unless the whole character be remodelled into Christian excellence, and the whole heart devoted to God, so as to prepare us for appearing before our Maker on the last and most solemn day this world is ever to behold!

All concur in thinking that on a death-bed the pious Christian is best off, but many fail to perceive that in life also he is happiest; yet those who would compare the value or the enjoyment of this world's greatest objects to those of another, are as ignorant and as foolish as an uninstructed child who believes the moon to be larger and brighter than the stars, because it is nearer. The philosopher knows better, but the Christian knows best, seeing, as he does, that this short life is introductory to a better, that here we have only a sample of life to render us desirous of more, and only a sample of happiness to show what it might be in pure and holy perfection. It was the saying of one in ancient times, who preferred the dissolute pleasures of luxury and vice to the self-denying moderation of a Christian course, that it would be most desirable to live out his days in licentious indulgences with his present associates and habits, "but to die like St. Ambrose!" Very different was such an idea from that of a pious, talented, and consistent Christian, who frequently

said, when suffering under long and deep adversity, "I would not accept the gift of all I once hoped for, to be the person that unbroken prosperity would have made me."

Happy the man that sees a God employ'd
In all the good and ill that chequer life;
Resolving all events, with their effects,
And manifold results, into the will
And arbitration wise of the Supreme.

COWPER.

CHAP. XIII.

THE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANS, AND THEIR RESPONSIBILITY FOR ITS USE.

The Son of God is gone to war, a kingly crown to gain,
His blood-red banner streams afar! Who follows in his train?
Who best can drink the cup of woe, triumphant over pain?
Who boldest bears his cross below? He follows in his train.

The martyr first, whose eagle-eye could pierce beyond the
grave,
Who saw his Master in the sky, and call'd on him to save,
Like him, with pardon on his tongue, in midst of mortal pain,
He pray'd for them who did the wrong. Who follows in
his train?

A glorious band, the chosen few on whom the Spirit came,
Twelve valiant saints, the truth they knew, and brav'd the
cross and flame,
They met the tyrant's brandish'd steel, the lion's gory mane;
They bow'd their necks the death to feel. Who follows in
their train?

A noble army, men and boys, the matron and the maid,
Around their Saviour's throne rejoice, in robes of light
array'd, [and pain—
They climb the dizzy steep of heav'n, through peril, toil,
O God! to us may grace be giv'n to follow in their train!

HEBER.


WHEN a skilful physician has long attended his
patient, prescribing cures, both nauseous and pain-

ful, we may feel sure that as long as he continues to inflict so much suffering, he still entertains expectations of producing a recovery. The more severe his remedies, the greater must be the necessity; but nevertheless each prescription is given in the hope of doing good. If at last every expedient has failed to produce a favourable change, the doctor ceases to prosecute so desperate a case; and takes his leave, desiring that the invalid may be allowed to indulge all his fancies without restraint, and to do whatever is most for his present ease. All men know what that means; and it becomes evident at once to the sick man himself, as well as to his family, that every hope is over—that his final doom is sealed.

In a somewhat similar way is the mind of man treated by the great Physician of souls. The worst sentence that can be pronounced on the case of any human being is, like that of Ephraim, "Let him alone!" The saddest state of all is, to be left in heartless prosperity, like the Queen of Babylon, when she said, "I shall sit as a queen, and shall see no sorrow." When Solomon lived in the glare of success, with not a wish ungratified, we perceive that "Solomon did much forget God;" and David in his adversity exclaimed, as almost every living man may do with equal truth, "Before I was afflicted I went astray."

It is very generally remarked, that a great hardness of character arises in those who suffer little; and if there be a man in the world who has never known sorrow, let no one wish to have him for a friend. Affliction is a wintry blast, sent to destroy the weeds in our characters, and if we would console others, we must endure much ourselves. Thus, and thus only, shall we be fitted "to give the comfort wherewith we have been comforted of God." To learn by rote what sorrow is cannot be done: as it requires experience, deep, long-tried, and well-considered, before we can declare to others, from personal knowledge, the consolatory truth that, even though hurried from sorrow to sorrow, yet whatever was, whatever is, and whatever may still be to come, can be welcomed on the certain assurance that it was necessary and is best.

The salutary influence of sorrow should not be limited to the individual who suffers, because the wholesome influence of witnessing a Christian's conduct under affliction, and of sympathising in the trial, should extend to all who know him; and may, perhaps, reach far beyond what our limited knowledge can conceive. No one advances alone towards the happiness or misery of another world; and little can the most insignificant of men conjecture how extensive may have been the influ-



ence, for good or evil, which has attended his own apparently unimportant conduct. Some casual remark, or careless jest which seemed at the moment scarcely to be noticed, may, perhaps, have stamped its permanent mark on the mind of another; the impression made by an eloquent sermon is often seriously diminished in the estimation of those around by an indifferent look or a careless glance; and in London once a great bank was broken, because when its solvency came under discussion, a stranger gave an ominous shake of the head.

A thousand instances might be quoted how the most trifling, unintentional actions produce the most lasting effects. This was evidenced some time since by a poor Hindoo lighting his fire one night in a jungle, and being thus accidentally the means of guiding a distinguished party of English travellers, benighted and in danger, to comfort and safety. A lady once living in the very whirlpool of pleasure and amusement, as if this world were a mere play-ground for diversion, being, nevertheless, *blasé* with indulgence, and haunted by discontented and melancholy thoughts, became surprised constantly to observe in the calm and tranquil countenance of a stranger who lived opposite, that she seemed invariably happy. Being curious to ascertain the source of such incessant cheerfulness, this victim of ennui re-

solved, in an idle hour, to track her neighbour's footsteps, by which means it became evident that the stranger's time was spent in visiting the abodes of poverty, and in going regularly to church. Having followed the object of her curiosity into a pew, she listened with newly awakened interest to the service, felt all its divinely bestowed comfort, and became from that hour a diligent, devoted, and happy Christian, though the person who caused this fortunate change never knew that she did so much good by merely looking contented.

Few, indeed, fully estimate the enormous responsibility attached to one single hour, to one single action, or even to a single look, by those professing to be Christians, who are intrusted with a degree of influence which in another world only will they be able fully to estimate.

It is a well-known fact, that a clergyman of the most admirable talents and piety, now eminent in the church, became first converted from a state of blasphemous infidelity, by accidentally hearing, when a student at the University, that several young men of high rank and still higher principle had declined dining with one of his friends, as they understood he was expected, and they could not willingly consent again to hear the conversation of an infidel, a being more to be despised than Balaam's ass, because more obsti-

nately and stupidly unbelieving. This was an arrow which struck home to his very heart: he became excessively agitated at finding himself so despised for his opinions, commenced a diligent study of Holy Scripture, became convinced how truly it is the fool only who can say in his heart "there is no God," and having been thus brought to the knowledge of Divine Truth, many have since benefited for time and eternity by his teaching and example.

There is a want of moral indignation in the world now at either vice or infidelity, and it is well for those who dare, thus to give their vote and influence on the side of all that gives dignity or worth to human nature. The effect of right feeling is often incalculable when none was anticipated. An old Scotch clergyman, who had lived in the most exemplary manner, was, when near his end, most deeply affected by the consideration that his two sons, both obstinately opposed to receiving any serious impressions of religion, should have perceived that, during his illness, he felt oppressed sometimes by the severest depression of mind, and by an unconquerable apprehension at the thought of immediate death. The recollection of his past sins had come so vividly to mind, as frequently happens at such a time, that he could not entirely conceal the distress caused by his accusing conscience; but ex-

cumstances were ordered by Divine Providence differently from what he could have anticipated, and good came out of evil. One of his sons, remembering the long course of his father's exemplary life, became strongly and influentially impressed by the recollection of that very solemn text, "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" From that period the tendency of his life was entirely changed, so that he exhibited an eminent exemplification of every Christian excellence, the benefit of which extended to many, and may exist from generation to generation, as, emulating the virtues of his father's life, he became in after years a zealous and exemplary clergyman.

Such influence for good is chiefly to be attained by cultivating between parents and children, friends and relatives, that sympathy and affection which is founded on the mutual dependence subsisting between individuals thus united for comfort and happiness. Could we imagine any man placed beyond the reach of vicissitude or grief, enjoying a state of unalterable prosperity, how impossible it would be for him to understand, or to sympathise in the sufferings of others, and what an object of indifference would that spoiled child of prosperity become, standing high and dry on his pinnacle of security, to his fellow-creatures, buffeting for their very lives in the deep waters of

adversity. The feelings of those in circumstances so opposite, would be as mutually incomprehensible as if they were beings of a different nature. They could have no more sympathy than a bird in its gilded cage with the choristers of the grove.

A curious little allegory, originally contained in Dr. More's "Divine Dialogues," and since beautifully versified by Parnell, may with some slight alterations illustrate, in its own quaint and original way, the uses of affliction, or even its absolute necessity. "Far in a wild, unknown to public view, a pious hermit who had long perplexed himself about the administration of this world's affairs, and especially that the greatest sorrows befall the best men, resolved at last to compose the disorder of his mind by leaving his moss-grown bed and humble cell, to travel abroad and view the course of events. Scarcely had he forsaken his cave before he was accosted by an interesting young stranger, 'His raiment decent, his complexion fair,' who became so agreeable that he felt delighted to proceed with so pleasant a companion. After they had agreed to lodge and eat always together during their journey, the hermit became startled and shocked to see, that, in a house where they had been most hospitably entertained, his fellow-traveller, previous to departing, buried in the earth, beyond the possibility of its ever being

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found again, a very splendid golden goblet, which their host had on the previous evening filled to the brim and drained to the dregs.

The hermit felt scandalised that a friend he had previously esteemed should be guilty of such an act against one who had been so highly civil to them; and, heartily wishing for an opportunity to part, he resolved narrowly to observe his behaviour in other places before he made any audible remark, or subjected himself to the annoyance of a quarrel.

The following night the two travellers applied in vain for admission to the spacious mansion of a surly, inhospitable miser, who refused them shelter from the storm, so they were forced to sleep amidst wind, rain, and lightning, in the open fields; yet next morning the young stranger was observed, by the hermit, to thrust in a heavy purse of gold at the churlish man's window, and to leave it there — an act, as it appeared, of madness, no more to be accounted for than the crime of the previous night.

At a neighbouring castle the two companions were received with the utmost cordiality; but for this entertainment the return was worse than before, for when leaving that place the hermit saw his companion secretly snatch away the young heir of the family, an only son, and carry him off. The aged traveller, unable to see a motive for so

cruel a robbery, and confounded with astonishment and fear, was scarcely able any longer to forbear from a vehement remonstrance, but being peaceably inclined and timid, he resolved for one night longer to contain himself, and if he could not escape, to say nothing.

During the following visit which was their last in company, the host in his splendid castle gave them yet better treatment than any they had hitherto experienced, and after accommodating his guests with whatever could render their short residence either pleasing or advantageous, he ordered his favourite servant in whom he entirely confided, and on whose care he depended for all his comfort, to be their guide through the grounds. Scarcely, however, had they advanced a few paces in their progress, before, to the hermit's utter consternation, the young traveller, when crossing a deep and rapid stream, suddenly thrust this invaluable servant over a bridge into the water, where he was drowned.

Unable to control himself a moment more, the hermit, with flashing eyes, and rage no longer to be concealed, passionately accused his fellow-traveller of the basest ingratitude, declaring that he never more could have any intercourse with one capable of such wanton cruelty. The young stranger smiled at this honest zeal in the worthy hermit, then, suddenly throwing off his cloak, he

appeared in the benignant form of an angel, with wings whose colours glittered in the day, and declared that he had been sent upon a special mission to ease the good hermit's mind of all perplexity respecting the sorrows of the righteous, and to teach him, where he cannot unriddle, still to trust. 'The first man you visited,' he explained, 'was a person too luxurious to be good; of excellent natural qualities, but all eclipsed through his tendency to intoxication, mainly encouraged by the pride he took in displaying that heir-loom in his family, the golden cup, the losing of which has destroyed his love of excess in wine.

'The second man, so rough and morose, deserved to be punished for selfishness by the increase of his wealth, which will induce him to hoard the more, and to enjoy himself the less, as the greater weight his purse carries, the narrower it becomes.

'The family whom I deprived of their only child had been, until the birth of that son, eminent in piety, liberal in charity, and addicted to the practice of every virtue. Since they had a son, however, the doting parents, once far advanced in a Christian course, had retraced their path to earth again, became degraded into the most excessive love of this world, and instead of helping, as formerly, their indigent neighbours, every thought has been of late engrossed about enriching that child of their old age, and providing for its re-

motest posterity, never, in fact, to be born. God, to save the parents, took the son.

‘ The fourth man was deceived and cheated by that rogue of a servant. He pretended the most disinterested attachment to his master, whom for his own ends he alienated from all his natural connexions, and cajoled into a degree of pride tending to his ruin.’

Having said these words, the angel instantly vanished, and the good hermit returned, much enlightened, to his cell, where he never afterwards required to be taught, that affliction is frequently God’s way of showing us mercy ; that even if cast into the lowest abyss of misery, we still have reason to hope it is done with the wisest view to our ultimate good, and that surely the Christian should without hesitation coincide in the declaration, that a man who loses the whole world, may nevertheless consider himself fortunate if he gain his own soul.”

The bending hermit here a prayer begun —
Lord ! as in heaven, on earth thy will be done ;
Then gladly turning, sought his ancient place,
And pass’d a life of piety and peace. PARNELL.

Many a Christian would be ready with perfect truth to say in his own case, as a heathen philosopher once did, when calmly gazing on the ruin of his house, his estate, and all his possessions,

"If those things had not perished, I should have perished." As we may infallibly estimate the value attached to any possession by ascertaining how much the owner would sacrifice to preserve it, he must prize very highly what he would give his fortune to retain ; but if the Christian would give fortune, friends, fame, health, and life itself, rather than endanger his own soul, then and then only does he know its real worth.

The servant of God has no sinecure ; but aware that this world is not his rest, he feels no wish that it were so, because his whole spirit is occupied in reaching forward to the things that are before him. He has a laborious, but to him a pleasing task of discipline to encounter, being pledged to a life of piety, and bound to remember hourly and momentarily that he has undertaken to perform a ceaseless round of Christian duties, — the diligent improvement of his own mind and character, including the purifying and elevating of all his thoughts and feelings, so that not a single cobweb shall be permitted to disfigure the edifice. With a view to his own benefit, as well as to the good of all whom he can influence, the Christian must deeply study that mysterious volume, the heart of man, which he will best do by observing his own, after the manner of Locke, the most profound and penetrating of all philosophers into the arcana of the human mind, who declared that all

his knowledge was derived from reading the various mazes of thought in himself; while, in truth, he lived as if there were in all creation, only God and his own soul. Some people attempt to enjoy existence on that plan of selfish indolence, "any thing for a quiet life," but we cannot have health of mind or body without the vigorous exercise of all the powers with which we are entrusted.

Man's is laborious happiness at best, and the Christian has of course decided, therefore, always to pursue worthy objects, to cultivate the best associates, and to act from well-principled motives. He must enrich his memory on sacred subjects, regulate his taste for society on the best of models, and transplant his affections to a better world. He should feel the tenderest pity for all the temptations of others, and yet exercise the firmest conscientiousness in resisting them himself; he must forget every injury, and remember every benefit; being always lenient in judging his neighbours, and only rigid in censuring himself. He must look to the Holy Spirit for light to see his duty, as well as for strength to perform it, not with "folded arms and slackness of mind," but under the consciousness that in every hour and every action of his life he needs a conquest over himself, and a pardon from God, to be ob-

tained not by any merit of his own, but by the sole and sufficient merit of Christ his Redeemer.

When Antoninus, Archbishop of Florence, received a remonstrance from his secretary, who disapprovingly remarked upon the ceaseless labours he undertook, and said that the life of a bishop must be truly pitiable, if he were doomed to wear out his existence in such a hurry of unremitting labour, the good ecclesiastic, conscious that none can be supinely good, and still continuing his exertions, made this reply, "To enjoy inward peace, we must, amidst all our affairs, ever reserve a closet, as it were, in our hearts, where we are to retire within ourselves, and where no worldly business can enter." In his last words he frequently repeated his favourite maxim: "To serve God is to reign."

Few could read, without admiration and interest, the poetical language, and the beautiful ideas, imagined by Montgomery as being a suitable prayer for Adam in his last penitential and dying hour. The thoughts and feelings are such as any Christian might wish to live or to die on; and who would not long to adopt such words and such feelings as are expressed in these lines from that most admirable poem, "The World before the Flood?"

— Thou, of my faith, the author and the end!
Mine early, late, and everlasting friend!

The joy, that once thy presence gave, restore,
Ere I am summon'd hence and seen no more :
Down to the dust returns this earthly frame.
Receive my spirit, Lord, from whence it came.
Rebuke the tempter, show thy power to save,
O let thy glory light me to the grave,
That those who witness my departing breath,
May learn to triumph in the grasp of Death.

CHAP. XIV.

THE MANIFESTATION OF GOD IN HIS WORKS.

What is the heaven our God bestows?
No prophet yet, no angel knows;
Was never yet created eye
Could see across eternity.

HEBER.

THE wonders of existence break upon us so gradually during our progress from childhood to maturity, that we are scarcely at any time fully conscious of the astonishment they are calculated to excite; but if we started at once into life, and, like Adam, into full consciousness, how amazing would the revelation be, of all those mysteries, and all those hourly miracles by which we are surrounded! If God has given to his enemies such a world, what will be the glory of that world in store for his chosen friends! The most impressive and elevating spectacle which this world affords, is after midnight closes in awful silence over the world, and when nothing seems awake but our God and ourselves, to contemplate the starry firmament, in all its sacred pomp and glorious symmetry. Well may the visible presence

of those pure and shining orbs, in their more than earthly magnificence, overawe the short-lived mortals who exist and die beneath their ceaseless presence; and while thus permitted to behold the glittering pavement of heaven, "not deeply to discern, nor much to know," how keenly should the Christian, born to wonder and adore, follow that track which leads to the heaven of heavens, that there, when as a taper all these suns expire, and all that frame of worlds is dissolved, he may shine, as is promised, like the stars for ever and ever. As the uninstructed eye sees in those resplendent orbs little more to excite admiration and awe than if they were glow-worms glittering in the sable atmosphere of night, so does the distance of eternal objects diminish, to an unreflecting mind, their aspect of magnitude and importance; but the Christian, like the astronomer, having calculated, as far as a limited comprehension can conceive, the tremendous disparity, sees in the one a diminutive object which lights its lamp for an hour, and in the other, with ever-increasing wonder, so stupendous a creation of lasting grandeur, that it may well be considered the glorious evidence of an almighty and eternal God. When Bonaparte, one star-light evening, heard a group of his generals talking infidel trash, he pointed to the glorious firmament above, saying, "Messieurs! qui est-ce qui a fait tout cela?"

And truly, as Lord Bacon remarked, it would be less difficult to believe all the most absurd fables of the Talmud or of the Koran, than to believe that this world is without a creating mind.

Man, with his contracted powers, can compute only by centuries, and finds, when he contemplates the revolutions of a planet, that one single circuit of its existence not only exceeds the duration of his own life, but the lives of many generations. Therefore when he would illustrate in his own mind the duration of eternity, "when change shall cease, and time shall be no more," he finds no measure and no understanding fitted to grapple with so vast an idea, and the defeated spirit hopelessly recoils from so vain an attempt.

How clearly do the heavenly bodies, in their transcendent beauty, proclaim, from age to age, "the story of their birth!" And if the admirable Hooker, on his deathbed, found it the last and greatest pleasure of his enlightened intellect, "to consider the order of the angels," how pleasingly might our minds be occupied frequently in studying the unchangeable order of the heavenly bodies, imitating, at the same time, a skilful pilot, who keeps his eye on the stars and planets, but nevertheless has his hand busy at the helm beneath.

Our eternal God reigns in silence, while we, with all our busy thoughts and plans, are placed *between the silent stars above and the silent dead*

beneath, to employ ourselves in timely meditation on the ephemeral nature of our own awfully responsible existence, and on that final hour when the ancient sceptre of death shall be broken, when "to her funeral pile this aged world shall be borne," and when the trumpet of the last day shall call us again to life. When Adam first awoke to existence, these bright stars were there arranged as now. In the Book of Job, the noblest and most ancient poem in the world, we read of Orion and the Pleiades, still so familiar to the nightly contemplations of man; and those bright constellations witnessed the death of Christ, the martyrdom of the apostles, the successive generations of our sentenced race passing into oblivion, and they shall hereafter look down upon this world, as beautiful and as majestic as to-day, on that solemn night when we close our eyes to earthly scenes for ever. Thus in the radiant glory of the sun, "proud regent of the sky," in the courses of the planets, in the order of the seasons, and in all the vicissitudes of life, we witness the sure accomplishment of God's almighty will; and few can wonder at any degree of effect created on the mind by such a display. It was the grandeur and awfulness of a thunderstorm which first led to the conversion of a mind so open to the sublime as that of Luther; and every influence that such scenes can exercise on our own minds must

be salutary, and ought to be cherished. When we are brought to see how truly "the heavens declare the glory of God," then should the earth show forth his praise, in the adoration of man, for whom these glorious scenes are made.

We should habitually look, not merely at the works of creation, but, through them, to the Creator, thankful that the evidences of his power are such as we may be permitted to study, and in some degree to comprehend—all calculated likewise to cheer the heart of man, whether the bright stars above our heads, or the birds that sing their lively chorus around our path, or the gay flowers beneath our feet. The pleasures bestowed by such beautiful decorations of nature are lost to mere animals; but flowers are our companions in sorrow as in joy, to decorate our feasts and our graves, though, as an evidence of their enlivening nature, not one has the mournful hue of black. Our Divine Saviour himself pointed out their gorgeous hues as a source of pleasing admiration, and himself partook in that love of flowers which is one of our most innocent enjoyments: "Behold the lilies of the field."

I was lately alone, gazing at night upon a splendid landscape, all the beautiful features of which had long been familiar to me; but on this occasion the whole outline was dimly shown by *the pale, cold light of the moon*, and as I gazed

at those shadowy objects so indistinctly revealed, the scene might have been compared to the memory of past years, from which the gay sunshine of life has departed. Many a joyous group I had formerly beheld on those magnificent terraces, many a merry laugh in my remembrance had echoed among the overhanging trees; but now the pulse of life seemed to have stopped, and not a breath disturbed the solemn stillness. Sound and motion alike had vanished from the scene, and all appeared as lifeless and extinct as the hopes and fears, the joys and sorrows, which once had agitated those I remembered there. The tale of their lives has already been told, and they are gone to that world in which their sorrows are ended, and their best hopes, all through an immortal round of years, to be realised. They shall yet rise to "bless the dawn of everlasting day."

The value of every possession is diminished when we know that only for a short time it shall be ours. If an estate were given to any man for but one year, or a diamond lent for only one day, how indifferently would either be estimated! but does not life itself diminish in worth every hour, when we consider, how much nearer the time is every moment approaching when it must be forfeited?

Here we are but tenants at will; and though, from the well-known and busy scenes of life, many

would be loth to withdraw, yet in numerous instances all observers have been astonished when those apparently most agitated with the affairs of this life, and most engrossed by its business, have at length been made aware that their end was inevitably near, and closed up the account at once, cheerfully preparing, with a degree of ease almost resembling indifference, to take a hurried leave of everything that had hitherto interested or occupied them.

So long as God's will in respect to the continuance of life is not obviously declared, even a thoroughly prepared Christian may be agitated by suspense, hoping one thing to-day and fearing another to-morrow: but the instinctive desire of life, when no longer of use, is generally extinguished, and if the final sentence becomes known, there exists in a thoroughly submissive mind no more room for any anxiety, for any perplexity, or even for a wish. When Melancthon was dying, his son-in-law asked him whether he wanted anything, to which he replied, "Nothing but Heaven!"

Among the Christian poor especially, the approach of dissolution is generally met with perfect composure, because their faith is clear and unquestioning; but from the evidence of Sir Henry Halford we learn, that such a feeling of calm resignation to death, when perfectly inevitable, is *almost* universal, and that the instinct by which

we cling to life, so long as life is destined to continue, seems to leave the dying man when it can be of service to him no more. "Of the great number," says Sir Henry, "to whom it has been my painful professional duty to administer in the last hour of their lives, I have sometimes felt surprised that so few appeared reluctant to enter 'that undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveller returns.' Many, we may easily suppose, have manifested this willingness to die, from an impatience of suffering, and from that passive indifference sometimes resulting from debility and extreme bodily exhaustion. But I have seen those who arrived at a fearless contemplation of the future, from faith in the doctrine which our religion teaches. Such men are not only calm and supported, but even cheerful in the hour of death, and I never quitted such a sick-chamber without a wish that my last end might be like theirs. Some, indeed, have clung to life anxiously, painfully, but they were not influenced so much by a love of life for its own sake, as by the distressing prospect of leaving children hitherto dependent upon them to the mercy of the world. These indeed have sometimes wrung my heart."

It is most true, that the eyes which are to weep and the hearts to mourn for a dying Christian, form the last lingering tie it grieves him to break; for, truly, the mere worldly possessions which we

found here, and which belong only to the body, can be left, as well as the body itself, with no more solicitude than an old soldier feels as to what became of a limb long since lost in battle. That which belongs to the soul, friendship, affection, thought, and memory, these struggle for the immortal duration to which they are destined, and death cannot extinguish them. The strength of our sympathy with others even to the last was instanced by the final words of Charles Fox to his wife: "I pity you, but I die happy!"

The object of our attachment may be taken from us; we may be long separated by distance or by death, but the affection itself survives for ever, and the breaking asunder of such ties can only be exceeded in agony by the feeling of remorse for our sins. How carefully, then, should considerate friends, when attending the sick, check all demonstrations of that extreme sorrow with which their hearts are overwhelmed, that they may afford support to a dying friend, in his last extremity of human need: "Support yourself and support others," should be the maxim in every sick room. The heart may weep while the eye seems calm, and the true magnanimity of grief is to smile for the sake of others, while the sharpest sorrow is rankling in our own secret minds. An instance in demonstration of this may here, perhaps, be mentioned with advantage. It is not long since two

ladies were about to lose their husbands by an infectious fever. The first, when told the particulars of her husband's case, fainted away, was carried to bed and continued in such a state of vehement grief that she was never more in a condition to enter his presence, until death had separated them for ever. The other, as soon as she knew the dangerous nature of her husband's malady, with all external calmness, quietly took her seat beside his pillow, closed the curtains round her to prevent any others running the same risk, and silently administered every medicine with her own hand, until he expired. Which of these two was a Christian wife to her husband?

A double portion of fortitude is required by all who attend in the chamber of death, for nothing more acutely aggravates the suffering of a last hour than the unbridled emotions of those around. Not only do they excite the sorrowful sympathy of the dying man himself, but when his mind is enervated by bodily weakness, when he is casting a wishful look on what he leaves behind, and a trembling eye on the scene to which he is advancing, death must seem the more formidable, if those around be evidently overpowered with apprehension, pale and aghast, at the thought of that which is about to befall the sick man himself. In such a hour, it may cause the bravest heart to shrink if he observe the apprehensions, as well as

the grief of friends. Among the lower orders, whose sensibility is habitually blunted, the conversation round a dying man's pillow is on the subject of death as being so completely a matter of course, that it gains no imaginary terror from the remarks of those around, who talk of it as familiarly, especially in the Highlands of Scotland, as if each individual died every day; but the whispering horror with which it is alluded to in the sick room of the great might cause the stoutest heart to quail.

Survivors have time enough, when all is over, to grieve without restraint. Then may the bereaved give themselves up for a time to the most excruciating anguish; but while life remains, those only who think more of their own feelings than of the pangs which agonise the feeble frame of an expiring friend will sharpen the stroke of dissolution by testifying the whole amount of their anguish — they ought rather to show the heartfelt sympathy of a spirit calmed and elevated by the holy hope of meeting again.

The last lines written by the celebrated Mrs. Tighe give a touching idea of the sorrowful feelings and tender emotions with which she contemplated her impending separation from the mourning friends who surrounded her bed. When departing soon after to a better world, however, she was relieved of every fear, and trusted with heavenly

joy in the acceptance of her Redeemer. Mrs. Tighe expired, after six years of protracted suffering, in her 37th year, leaving these her last thoughts as a memorial to survivors: —

No, no, this anguish cannot last!
Beloved friends, adieu!
The bitterness of death were past,
Could I resign but you.

Yet oh! in every mortal pang
That rends my soul from life,
That soul, which seems on you to hang
Through each convulsive strife,

Even now, with agonising grasp
Of terror and regret,
To all in life its love would clasp
Clings close and closer yet.

Still why, immortal, vital spark!
Thus mortally opprest?
Look up, my soul, through prospects dark,
And bid thy terrors rest.

Forget, forego thy earthly part,
Thine heavenly being trust:
Ah, vain attempt! my coward heart
Still shuddering clings to dust.

CHAP. XV.

INSIGNIFICANCE OF THIS LIFE EXCEPT IN REFERENCE
TO ETERNITY.

O'er crackling ice, o'er gulfs profound,
With nimble glide the skaters play ;
O'er treacherous pleasure's flowery ground
Thus lightly skim, and haste away.

DR. JOHNSON.

WHILE Christians do right to place a due value on earthly happiness, as a gift of God which he means them to enjoy, yet they are willing at his decree to be rich or poor, anything or nothing, to part with every remnant of enjoyment, to leave the world before the world leaves them, and to anticipate, with even sometimes a solemn joy, that exchange which awaits them hereafter, from a scene of many sorrows and of many temptations, to a world of perfect holiness and of unutterable happiness.

Strong as is the principle of vitality, implanted for special purposes in the human mind, yet, finding life so darkly chequered with sorrow, many learn to rejoice that at least it is short; *and, more resigned to die than to live, they can*

hear without shrinking, though with deep solemnity, that awful summons, "The master calleth for THEE."

Bishop Jewell used to remark that a bishop should die preaching; and St. Augustine declared that in this life nothing is more pleasing than to prepare for a peaceable passage from the same. When that early Christian was told by his friends with every expression of gladness that he seemed likely to recover from a dangerous illness, he replied, "If I am not to die at all, it is well, but if ever, why not now?" His last words were such as every Christian might adopt for his own. "Thou hast redeemed me, O God of truth."

Before the soul, however, abandons the worn-out body, a believer must, if possible, renew, for the last time, a strict examination whether he is as well prepared to enter another life as to close his eyes on this vanishing scene; whether the moral palsy on his soul has been so removed by God's Holy Spirit, that, like the paralytic man, who, at the desire of Christ, could carry his bed, he has faith strong enough to lead him forward in a strength not his own. Little may be left to enjoy, and yet much may remain to fear, if he have advanced in life as over a pathless waste, following only the guidance of his own inclination, and not keeping circumspectly along the track plainly indicated in Scripture, or not living with earnest attention to

the chief purpose for which we are sent into life at all. In every situation we should think whether a satisfactory answer could be given if the Lord were to ask us, as he asked Elijah in the desert, "What doest thou here?" — for wherever we go, the question will be at the day of judgment hereafter, "What didst thou there?"

Many a world-worn spirit would gladly perhaps be called away from so saddened a world, if death were, like sleep, attained with perfect ease, and followed by no after responsibility. If man could part with his body as easily as a reptile can shake off its skin, few people are aware, perhaps, how many on such terms would do so. Were there no more difficulty in departing from this world than in going from house to house, had we only to "shake hands with death and be free," the exchange would be acceptable to many who now seem, in the eyes of those judging only by external appearance, fascinated, engrossed, and satisfied by this world's prosperities. A smiling countenance is no more an index of real happiness, than a mourning garb of real melancholy. Both may be assumed, or both genuine, yet real laughter is, no doubt, as rare as real tears, or more so, but who can discern the truth?

There sails the ship with streamers drest,

And shouts of seeming glee.

O God! how loves the mortal breast

To hide its misery.

HERB.

Burns, in one of his letters, written during a time when he stood highest upon the mount of song, when he had opened all the fountains of the human heart, when he seemed in love with nature and with life, and when he was the most jovial of poets, in the vigour of his life and the height of his fame, writes thus, "I have a hundred times wished that one could resign life as an officer resigns his commission: for I would not *take in* any poor ignorant wretch by *selling out*. Lately I was a sixpenny private, a miserable soldier enough; now I march to the campaign a starving cadet,—a little more conspicuously wretched. I am ashamed of all this; for though I do not want bravery for the warfare of life, I could wish, like some other soldiers, to have as much fortitude or cunning as to dissemble or conceal my cowardice."

Oh soon to me may summer's sun
No more light up the morn,
No more to me the autumn wind
Wave o'er the yellow corn.

But in the narrow house of death
Let winter round me rave,
And the next flow'rs that deck the spring
Bloom o'er my peaceful grave. BURNS.

It is not, then, regret for the world we are to leave, but a solemn anticipation of the world we are to enter, which causes the countenance of a

thinking man to change with awe when death is named; but if he could as clearly conceive the perfect felicity of heaven, as he knows the sorrows of earth, or even its best enjoyments, his faith would so overcome the world, that his idea of martyrdom would be to remain on the earth rather than to leave it.

To those who expect nothing hereafter, it is indeed a double death to die, but the most careless infidel shrinks back from the entrance to that unknown life, which instinct tells him, as revelation assures him, that all mankind are to enter, when they pass through the gate of death. Lord Byron said one day, "I feel I exist here, and I fear that I shall exist hereafter;" but how different was the testimony of that celebrated hero, Marshal Loudon, who, after partaking of the sacrament in the immediate prospect of death, said to the officers weeping around his bed, "I owe all the success I have had in this world to my confidence in God, as well as the consolation I shall experience at the moment I appear before him."

There is more of the philosopher than of the Christian in a curious letter of Franklin's, written during his latter days, and very characteristic of the author, when he says, "As I see nothing annihilated, and not even a drop of water wasted, I cannot suspect the annihilation of souls, or

believe that God will suffer the daily waste of millions of minds ready made, that now exist, and put himself to the continual trouble of making new ones. Thus finding myself to exist in the world, I believe I shall, in some shape or other, always exist. And with all the inconveniences human life is liable to, I shall not object to a new edition of mine, hoping, however, that the errata of the last may be corrected."

It is a strange and inexplicable feeling, when we contemplate our own departure, while, at the same time, calling to mind the long-absent image of some dear and confidential friend now no more, with whom we formerly compared thoughts and feelings on the great mysteries of another world, who was once as warm with life and affection as ourselves, who acted in the world as we act now, who had the same cares and fears, projects and hopes, who was one with ourselves, who thought as we think, lived as we live, and loved as we love, but who is already introduced amidst the scenes of eternity. He knows now all that perplexed our minds when we were together, but we, the intimate companions of his former thoughts, are yet groping onwards in the mere twilight of knowledge and of happiness.

It is not to the deceased Christian, but to the survivor, that pity is due. When we stand beside the remains of a friend to whom the bitter-

ness of death is over, how different is our living anguish from the placid and solemn composure of one who is done with sorrow! But a few hours before that countenance was instinct with life and affection, but we feel now that every future year must pass away before we again receive from those eyes one answering glance of kindness. In our dreams we may see sometimes the old never-to-be-forgotten look of sympathy and love, but we awaken only to a deeper feeling of loneliness. Our beloved companions are gone, and we ask in vain what are the solemn mysteries now imparted to those who never before had a thought in which we did not share.

Strange, indeed, is that line which separates life and death to mortal man! As we gaze on those features from which the fading hues of life, like the rays of twilight, are scarcely yet departed, we know that already all the perplexities of our being, on which we conversed so often together, are revealed to the friend, not yet removed in body, but divided in soul, from all our sorrows, sympathies, or hopes. Lamented in death, as beloved in life, we would ask of them, but we ask in vain, how the soul departs from the feeble body, what unknown worlds it immediately enters, how the spirit is elevated by beholding the amazing revelations of eternity, and whether the departed be still permitted to

sympathise with the trials of those whom they have left to struggle onwards through the same difficulties that once were their own.

As blessings are said to brighten when they take their flight, that is especially the case in respect to the friends we are destined to lose, with the memory of whom we can associate no remembrance of sorrow but the sorrow of having lost them. When words cannot speak our affection, and our tears only can testify it, how interesting for the Christian to number over the many dear and intimate friends whom he remembers in happy groups around him diligently preparing, with himself, for the great change, and to know that they are already awaiting him in the spiritual world. Once the separation of a day was most sorrowful to both; now he hourly feels that the separation is for all the months and years of this world; but even then, there is some comfort, though there are also feelings of incommunicable grief, when the heart, smitten by successive calamities, finds that all beneath the sun is "darkened down to naked waste." To look back overwhelms the mind with recollections too interesting to be resisted, too agonising to be endured; and to look forward shows a chasm which we tremble to look into; yet when neither men nor angels could help us, the Christian looks

to a compassionate Saviour with a certainty of receiving peace and sympathy.

Our dying friends come o'er us like a cloud,
 To damp our brainless ardours and abate
 That glare of life, which often blinds the wise :
 Our dying friends are pioneers to smoothe
 Our rugged pass to death Young.

CHAP. XVI.

INSTINCTIVE CONVICTION OF HUMAN BEINGS THAT
THEY ARE IMMORTAL.

He smil'd in death, and still his cold pale face
Retains that smile; as when a waveless lake,
In which the wintry stars all bright appear,
Is sheeted by a nightly frost with ice,
Still it reflects the face of heaven unchang'd,
Unruff'd by the breeze or sweeping blast.

BERNARD BARTON.

WHEN Pope was dying, he said, "I am so certain of the soul's being immortal, that I seem to feel it within me, as it were by intuition." That instinctive belief which he describes is felt even by those professing to be infidels, who, amidst the appalling perplexities of obstinate unbelief, yet betray, perhaps inadvertently, an instinctive consciousness of the inevitable future. The shudder of awe with which they hear that any human being with whom they are acquainted has very suddenly died, is a proof of their conviction that he has not been utterly extinguished, for if the deceased had fallen only into permanent insensibility, if he had merely lost a few years of animal existence, if he had but escaped the ills and lost the joys of some remaining days, by sharing sooner than was expected the common lot, how

calmly might even his best friends contemplate such an event. It is not so, however, in respect to any one, for the power of instinct in such an emergency refuses to be quelled by any fallacies of perverted reason, and the great truth stands distinctly revealed before the shrinking mind of a would-be infidel, that the body which lived and the soul which has departed are both immortal, both to be introduced, when they pass from this transient scene, into another as real, but infinitely more important.

It is, indeed, the fool only, who says in his heart, "There is no God," and he says so because he wishes it; yet, as the most determined sceptic cannot say, "There is no death," when he witnesses that awful event overtaking others, or when he himself experiences its approach, he begins to find that human life is not like a froward child, which may be played with and humoured, and by any means kept quiet until it fall asleep, and then the care shall be over; no, a man might as easily attempt to convince himself that there are no stars in the firmament, or that the sun is invented or manufactured by philosophers, as that there is no intelligent and almighty Creator of this most marvellous world.

When an infidel, dining once with a large party, *had* openly professed his scepticism, declaring he *saw* in the works of nature no sufficient evidence

of a God, Sydney Smith, who was present, made no reply, but, some time afterwards, when helping the stranger to one of the side dishes, of which he had expressed much approbation, the witty dean said to him, with a look of inquisitive earnestness, "Pray, sir, do you believe in a cook?"

The aspect of death brings to the mind of all present the consciousness that this world is indeed like a rapid succession of dissolving views, a shifting phantasmagoria, displayed before a mind and spirit fitted long to survive all its changes,— and that it is of the body, not the soul, that this sentence is written, "Dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return."

Men who devote their time and affections to the frivolities of this world might be compared to children in a storm at sea, who delight in watching the white foam on the waves which rushes in to sink them. Nothing is more remarkable in the history of shipwrecks than that description of the Pegasus, lost in 1843, where it is mentioned that the crew and passengers, even in the very agonies of terror and of sudden death, had their thoughts irresistibly directed towards two lovely children, unconscious of danger, who diverted themselves at play till within a few moments of their destruction, amused with the feathers of foam that were blown along the deck. It is generally thought, the admirable Christian clergyman.

Mr. Mackenzie, died in his efforts to save them — a true emblem how the brightest pleasures of a stormy world may but render us heedless of danger, when, without a strong arm to save us, we shall be plunged the next moment into final shipwreck. An instance of Christian foresight is related of a distinguished statesman, recently deceased, that when tempted once to do that which seemed to him sinful, he stopped, saying, "Satan is very busy at death-beds, and I would not have this deed on my conscience at mine."

Religion is truly described as "an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast." It lies deep, and often unseen, yet causes permanent security, and all men learn best to know its value when the storms of life become threatening. Any man who lives at 500 miles distance from the ocean would consider an anchor in his house a mere encumbrance. Even a mariner at sea, if the wind be always fair, and the billows always at rest, may seldom, perhaps, look to it for additional security, but the anchor is appreciated in its worth and in its power at last, after the sky becomes overcast, and the voyager sees himself situated like St. Paul, when "neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and all hope that he should be saved seemed taken away."

In such a solemn hour, should we greatly fear, *let us find out the cause.* If it be our sins, let

us instantly repent of them; if our love of the world, let us restrain it; if our deficiency of faith, let us earnestly repeat the petition of the Apostles, "Lord, increase our faith!" How concise and energetic are all the prayers in Holy Scripture!

On such occasions the Christian will often, in meditation and prayer, seek a solitary interview with God, who promises, by his Spirit, to instruct and prepare us for entering his visible presence; and let us in the meanwhile nourish our confidence and gratitude, by diligently recalling to mind, not as we are too apt, perhaps, to do, the sorrows that have oppressed us, but, on the contrary, to call up before our remembrance the numerous blessings which have enriched our past existence, and the many which still remain to adorn our path of life. Thus, in reviewing our merciful preservation throughout the past, new encouragement will arise to place our whole, implicit, unwavering reliance on a beneficent God for the whole futurity of time and eternity.

When Moses first beheld his own rod turned into a serpent, he started back with terror; but, after obeying the divine command to grasp it in his hand, he did so with perfect confidence, perceiving that there was no real cause of apprehension. Thus it is also with those who, in obedience to God, resolutely prepare with submission to meet whatever he ordains. The prayer of a half-

converted Socinian was thus expressed, "Let me be saved in God's own way," and the Christian, living and dying under a clearer light, should as fully conform his mind to implicit obedience.

Without frequently diving into the depths of his own mind, a man's conscience becomes as devoid of light as a house without a window, while darker and darker still the darkness grows; but every night the Christian, when he retires to rest, may consider it a rehearsal of death, reflecting that sleep is a short death, and death but a longer sleep. By a strict examination of his own heart, also, he might have a nightly emblem of the day of judgment; so that when his body at last, like a ruined habitation, must be deserted, the enlightened and purified soul shall almost gain a glimpse of heaven while ascending from the bed of death.

Such was the preparation and such the end of a very aged Christian minister, Robert Bruce, who one day, after having breakfasted with his family, fell into a deep meditation, and exclaimed, "Hold, daughter, hold! My master calls me." At these words his sight instantly failed; but he asked for a Bible, saying, "Look me out the eighth chapter of Romans, and set my finger on these words, 'I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, shall be able to separate me from the love of God,

which is in Christ Jesus my Lord.'” Having placed his finger on these words, he spoke for the last time, saying, “Now! God be with you, my children! I have breakfasted with you, and I shall sup this night with the Lord.”

If there be joy among the angels in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, what may be the joy of Christians over one they love, who is enabled to bear such a testimony that he is prepared for a happy eternity! The late very beautiful and much-admired Mrs. C——r, of C——th, when about to be most suddenly and most unexpectedly snatched away some months ago at the early age of twenty-seven, from the happy home of all her domestic and Christian virtues, calmly took leave of her husband and of her young children, without agitation or alarm, remarking, that her life on earth had been a cloudless summer, and that now she was about to enter, through the merits and mediation of her Redeemer, on a still brighter and happier state of existence in heaven. She repeatedly intimated her surprise that it was so easy to die, and her countenance seemed already expressive of that heaven she was so soon to enter, while the melody of her voice touched and affected all present. Soon after midnight, having bid farewell to all around, — which she did with tenderness, but without weakness, — she inquired if the morning were far advanced, ~~as she~~

felt desirous of seeing once more the light of day ; but, on being told it was very little after twelve o'clock, she remarked, with the utmost composure, " Then there will be no more sunshine for me in this world ; but henceforth my Redeemer shall be to me as the sun." After a few moments, she added, " I hope to-morrow will be a bright sunny day, and that you will all go out to walk and think of me as happy — happy — happy ! " She then begged that the window might be opened to let her breathe for the last time the fresh air of heaven, and having expressed herself gratified by its reviving influence, she shortly after " fell asleep in Jesus."

In such a sudden emergency, it is no new and unknown friend whose ways the Christian has to learn, but he acquires an habitual consciousness wrapped round every event of life or death, that God has, for good purposes, decreed and will send his blessing along with it. We who have been enlisted into God's service, are liable to very sudden calls on our submission, for almost every great event in life comes unexpectedly ; and for that reason, probably, David in speaking of grief calls it " the wine of astonishment." When sorrow comes with a great and sudden wrench, the mind seems at first to become powerless, like a watch which when wound above its due height *stands still*. If we are thus stunned by the onset

of sudden calamity, man's best support consists in a long-practised habitual consciousness that the decree of God must be right, which carries our thoughts onward from present suffering, to the hope of a future never-fading inheritance.

When the Rev. Mr. Halyburton was suddenly expiring, he said, "Here is demonstration of the reality of religion, that I, a poor, weak, timorous man, as much afraid of death as any, am now enabled, by the power of grace, composedly and with joy, to look death in the face. I dare look it in the face in its most ghastly shape, and hope within a little to have the victory."

Heav'n, as its purest gold, by tortures tried;
The saint sustain'd it, but the sufferer died.

POPE.

CHAP. XVII.

SORROW NOT ONLY USEFUL, BUT NECESSARY, TO THE
WELFARE OF MAN.

Great God, thy judgments are supremely right,
And in thy creatures' bliss is thy delight ;
But I have sinn'd beyond the reach of grace,
Nor can thy justice yield thy mercy place,
So bright, my God ! my crimson vices shine,
That only choice of punishment is thine.
Be thy will done ! Let, let thy wrath descend,
While tears like mine from guilty eyes offend ;
Dart thy red bolts, though in the dreadful stroke
My soul shall bless the being I provoke.
Yet where ! oh where, can even thy thunders fall ?
Christ's shield o'erspreads, and saves me from them all,
Translated from the French of Barreaux.

It is instructive to observe that sin having first introduced sorrow into the world, sorrow is now the best cure for sin, therefore moral evil becomes in fact the means of its own destruction. As it is only by receiving their lesson in the dark that birds can be taught to sing other notes than nature gave them, so, when the external attractions of this world are obscured, our attention *becomes* concentrated on the instructions in cheer-

ful submission which it is our duty and interest, though not our nature, to practise. To study religion merely as men study a science, that they may understand the principles, is not sufficient, because its feelings must be also incorporated into our whole heart and conduct, especially during affliction. Christians are not enjoined to smother their grief, but only to resist the excessive indulgence of it, though affliction so evidently improves the character, that when any human being seems more amiable, more pious, and less selfish than others, we instinctively ask ourselves by what grief or disappointment a disposition so admirable has been produced. It was well remarked that, as an irritating grain of sand accidentally introduced within the shell of an oyster incites the living tenant to form over the intrusive and unwelcome substance a shield, which soon becomes a precious pearl, so do the irregularities of our health or fortune induce efforts on our own part which produce the richest advantages.

Luther observes that, but for the teaching of affliction, he could not understand the Scriptures, which address most of their promises to sufferers, and through them we learn that every disappointment is intended to draw men off from the pursuit of earthly objects, and to lead them on in pursuit of others more permanent and more im-

portant, the nobleness of which consoles for the past, supports in the present, and renders men capable as well as worthy of a sublime and glorious futurity. With such a consciousness, there are sufferings, "sufferings to the death, which are not bitter, which possess their own great and marvellous enjoyment."

Heathens can, of course, see no use or advantage in the vicissitudes this world is filled with. Not observing the harmony of the universe, but recognising the hand of a God only when that harmony is interrupted by storms, tempests, or earthquakes, they become accustomed to regard our Creator as a source of unmitigated terror, delighting only in vengeance. Untutored savages, instinctively in their own case, conscious that they deserve punishment, see only the rigour of their sufferings, without being able to discover that a merciful intention lurks beneath the severest inflictions. How contrasted to the more enlightened feelings of a divinely-taught Christian, aware that not one needless sorrow in the whole world is visited upon man!

We are not thrown into existence to become the sport of accident, overlooked or forgotten by the very being who made us, but every disappointment is the prescription of God himself to cure our souls of inordinate love to this world; *and grief*, unlike death, which smites but once

and smites no more, is commissioned frequently to admonish us, to punish us, and to testify that peculiar love of God manifested in disciplining us for the highest places in his glorious court hereafter.

To break thy schemes of earthly joy,
And make thee find thine all in him.

Does Lazarus regret now that he was a beggar and afflicted? No! he has learned the secret purpose of God, to humble that he might exalt him. If a man complained loudly that his coat had been torn without observing that his arm had been fractured, he would not be more blind to the relative importance of events, than he who cares only for the sufferings of his body, without reference to the danger of his soul; but God weighs both in the balance of his unerring judgment, and has more regard to our souls in eternity than to our feelings now.

A tree deeply rooted in the earth requires many a stroke to fell it, and as the woodman's axe falls heavier and heavier at every repetition of the blow, so do our sorrows often become the sharper as they become the more numerous, that they may divide our affections from this world; and painful indeed is the process of disseverment while we are ready, like the patriarch of old, to exclaim, "I looked for some to have pity upon

me, but there was none, for comforters but found none."

If the inferior part of man, the body, be disciplined that the better part, the soul, may be aroused to prepare for judgment, how salutary is it that the fire should consume only what is worst, so that our sufferings shall be here for time, rather than hereafter for eternity. Our bodies are merely as the scaffolding around an edifice, intended to fall away as soon as the building has been perfected: and a very old author makes this quaint remark, "The loss of worldly blessings to a Christian is little more lamentable than the loss of his gloves to a man whose pockets are filled with gold."

Not till the rushing winds forget to rave,
Is heaven's sweet smile reflected on the wave.

ROGERS.

As Christ, then, prepares heaven for the Christian, we should pray that, by whatsoever means are surest and best, he will prepare us for heaven, and then, though our names be speedily blotted from the earth, they shall be written in the everlasting records of God. In such a confidence may we not look every event in the face with a sort of cheerful sadness? convinced that whether sickness, bereavement, or death itself be ordained to follow, each is ordered for our real good, as not

a sorrow can touch us unless it be essential to our well-being. Thus the Christian becomes, as an old author remarks, like wheat beneath the flail, and instead of flying up as chaff in the face of him who appoints the stroke, he lies submissively, like grain, at his feet.

A learned Jewish doctor seeing one of his friends in great depression of mind, said to him once, "If your grief be for the things of this world, I pray God to diminish it, but if for the things of the world to come, I pray God to increase it." Who would not say he was right? for we cannot be too much grieved at our sins, as that is a grief to be felt, and ever to be cherished when all lighter griefs are faded. When Christ prayed that his disciples might be delivered from "the evil," that only evil was not poverty, nor sickness, nor death itself, because to all these he knew that they were inevitably destined; but the only deliverance which a most compassionate Saviour desired, with the whole fervour of his heart, for a suffering people, was that they might be freed from sin, the root of all evil.

Our resignation is nothing in mere words, unless it be extended to our whole feelings, for not only our prayers but our thoughts are heard as distinctly in heaven as our voices are on earth. If, then, we are to be judged by our inward feelings and motives yet more than by our actions and

words, the silent consciousness that nothing is accidental will assist us to subdue all turbulent or excessive grief for the loss of earthly blessings. No one who has not this consideration can conceive how the assurance that God really has measured to a scruple what is necessary for his chosen family can bring peace to the soul. As long as men persist in referring painful circumstances to ill-luck, they are tortured by reflecting how it might have been prevented, because they link an event to mere accident, instead of referring it back to the main-spring of creation, the decree of an Omnipotent Creator.

Men wear out their spirits and weary their hearts by such vain lamentations as these: "Had the time or place been different this could not have occurred. Had the doctor been more skilful our friend might have recovered. Had we placed our money in a different bank it would never have broken!" Such regrets are expressed without a suitable reflection, that among Christians there is no such thing as chance; but each believer may use the words of Job: "These things are appointed for me." If our house be burned by a careless servant, it is done as much by the sanction of God's providence as if the mansion had been struck by lightning, therefore we need be no more angry at the servant than at the lightning; and when Joseph was cast into the pit by his brethren,

he was as much under the control of God's care as Jonah in the sea. The mere conviction that such vicissitudes have been all deliberately arranged by wisdom that cannot err sets all right, and no tongue can tell the peace produced by such an established belief, that heavy as the clouds may be, there is sunshine behind them, soon and certainly to break out.

The Christian learns at last to look on the events of life as he does on the weather, which, good or bad, cannot be altered; therefore it becomes obviously his only wisdom, such as it is, to make the best of it. He knows that life is no mere game of chance, but, as an antiquated author remarks, "the incidents of existence are dealt out to us like a hand at cards,—we cannot choose what the cards shall be, but we do choose whether to play them well or ill, and, whatever befall, our great interest is not to look at them in discouragement, but patiently to persevere in making the very best of those belonging to ourselves ;"

— the game of life

Looks cheerful, when one carries in one's heart

The inalienable treasure !

COLERIDGE.

If men had the privilege in their very last moment to ask a question respecting the "why and wherefore" of many an occurrence in their own lives, how earnestly would most people, even in that

solemn hour, desire an explanation, for what cause those prospects in which they once took the keenest interest never were realised; why hopes, on which their whole sum of happiness seemed to depend, were unexpectedly frustrated; and, probably, in another world such an insight will be given us, that we may trace the smallest as much as the greatest events to have been considerably ordained.

Christians are too apt, perhaps, only to recognise the directing hand of God on great occasions, whereas the true secret of peace is to remember, that the every-day trifles of life are as much under the direct guidance of God as the most important event. If a clock goes continually, with perfect and uninterrupted regularity, every man knows that the maker's skill has caused its excellence; but if every time the clock struck, the owner were to exclaim, "That must be a special interposition of the maker!" how utterly mistaken he would obviously be not to reflect that the minutest vibration of the pendulum has been as carefully foreseen and provided for, as the loudest and most conspicuous of its strokes.

The will of a Christian would never more be chafing against the will of God, if he could read his own life with a glossary to explain why the events of his career occurred as they did, — why the friends, perhaps, became changed in whom his

heart once confided,—why the schemes became frustrated which seemed formerly so promising,—why his health suddenly failed until life itself became a burden,—or his plans of usefulness were all rendered unavailing by circumstances the most untoward. Perhaps the fame he once enjoyed has become extinct, or, one after another, his cotemporaries, relatives, friends and neighbours have departed, leaving him to wander, with a feeling of ghastly desolation, through the last stage of life, as through a dreary desert, a stranger among his nearest kindred, coming from a generation to which they do not belong, and hurrying fast away to a far different scene. How touching was the exclamation made by one who had long been the idol of society, and the admiration of all his cotemporaries, the eloquent Burke; who, after the death of his only son, uttered these mournful words: “I am a poor, feeble, undone creature, in a desolate old age!”

Sad to say, there are sorrows in life so perplexing, so complicated, so difficult to know how to act right in, that contrasted with them, even the loss of those we love is comparatively easy, as that brings with it only the straightforward duty of submission for this life and hope for another; but all these gloomy dispensations would appear to the Christian written in characters of light, if the incomprehensible wisdom of God could be

understood in decreeing for us the training necessary before we pass out through the solemn gate of futurity. The bud may be bitter, but the fruit shall be sweet. Among mortals, there is an equality which entitles one man to ask another, when any thing occurs to dissatisfy him, why he ordered it thus? but whatever God ordains, let it be enough for us to know, that he who is incapable of arbitrary caprice, our own beneficent Creator, appointed the unwelcome stroke.

The higher the tide has once risen, the lower must be the ebb that follows; but whatever desolation may hereafter overtake ourselves, we must remember past mercies, and exercise that resignation which consists in a distrust of our own understandings, and a cheerful confidence in the wisdom of God. Thus, no longer inquisitively scrutinising the causes of our sorrow, or expecting the pleasures of life to be ready at our beck, we shall implicitly believe that all is right and best. In death, the Christian, having thoroughly learned that lesson, and said it too, will feel as Henry Martyn did, the last words of whose journal thus express his longing after immortality: — “Oh! when shall time give place to eternity! There none of those corruptions that add still more to the miseries of mortality shall be seen or heard of.” Very different from the hopeless language of Charles Lamb in his old age.

“ I am weary of the world, and the world is weary of me! My day is gone into twilight, and I don't think it worth the expense of candles.”

But O! when we have safely pass'd
Through every conflict but the last,
Still, Lord! unchanging, watch beside
My dying bed, for thou hast died;
Then point to realms of cloudless day,
And wipe the latest tears away.

CHAP. XVIII.

ON THE MEANS OF COMMEMORATING THE DEAD.

Friends, brothers, and sisters, are laid side by side,
Yet none have saluted, and none have replied.
Ah! sweetly they slumber, nor hope, love, or fear;
Peace, peace is the watchword — the only one here.

KEATS.

How keenly do all men of intellect and feeling desire to visit the birth-place, and still more the burial-place of the illustrious dead! The tomb of Virgil appears to give a material reality to his name; and when standing beside the grave of Shakspeare we seem brought more nearly into association with his spirit. Only a few handfuls of dust then divide us from his remains, and we read almost with a feeling of companionship his own strange epitaph on himself, which has so often deterred his admirers from disturbing his bones for a procession to Westminster Abbey, and will probably secure their being left in sacred repose till the last awful hour of this perishable globe — “the wreck of nature, and the crush of worlds”: —

Good friend! for Jesus' sake forbear
To dig the dust enclosed here:
Blest be the man that spares these stones,
And curs'd be he that moves my bones.

"The grave! the grave! it buries every error, it covers every defect; from its peaceful bosom spring none but fond regrets and tender recollections. Who can look down upon the grave, even of an enemy, and not feel a compunctious throb that he should ever have warred with the poor handful of earth that lies mouldering there?"*

In "burying our dead out of our sight," as the patriarch Abraham so pathetically expresses it, a solemn and tender feeling of respect seems natural to all. It is supposed that when our Divine Saviour replied to the young man, who wished to stay behind and bury his father, before he followed him, "Let the dead bury their dead," that the parent was merely aged and infirm, requiring probably years of care, not as people generally imagine, already dead, and his corpse laid out to be interred: the convert, therefore, was not asking a short leave of absence to perform a sacred duty, but making a pretext for postponing his obedience to an indefinite period.

The ancient Greeks and Romans were extremely anxious about the interment of deceased friends: and no wonder, as they believed that a soul could not be admitted into the Elysian fields until the body was committed to the earth.

Nothing is more extraordinary than to observe

* Washington Irving.



how differently a reverence for the dead is testified in various periods, and by various nations. The heathens, who had no expectations beyond this world, used merely to bury their friends at night, and to make the scene more dismal, hired mourners, to rend the air by "irrational wailings and frantic shrieks." The Greeks placed a piece of money in the mouth of a deceased person, as Charon's fee for wafting the departed soul over the river Styx. The ancient kings of Scotland had a rule that warriors should have as many pillars on their graves as they had slain enemies in battle. In some countries the body is carefully embalmed, in others consumed by fire; but the Parsees at Bombay suspend their dead on high, for the birds to devour, and consider that thus they are honoured, in the very way that is viewed in this country as the last extreme of disgrace.

The French, with characteristic sentimentalism, have *cimetières ornés à la pittoresque!* a fashion rapidly introducing itself in Britain, where every device that good taste or the most trumpery caprice can dictate is lavishly displayed with a profusion of panegyrical inscriptions, which might well account for the simple question of an astonished child, after spelling over the epitaphs of the meritorious dead, "Where are the bad people buried?"

If all inscriptions were suddenly to disappear except such as are deserved, how few would remain! Survivors should be as modest for a modest man, as he would have been for himself; as real piety blows no trumpet, nor desires to have it blown.

See stately tombs, see dim sepulchral pomp,
And monumental falsehoods, piled o'er men
Whose only worth is in their epitaphs.

R. MONTGOMERY.

The Jews always formerly interred the deceased without the city, and now, so thoroughly are they convinced of a coming resurrection, that the name they give to a burial-place is, "The House of the Living," implying that the dead only can be said to have attained to actual life. The ceremony of rending their clothes in token of mourning, used to be rigidly performed, but now, like other men in modern times, having become more economical, or more indifferent, they merely cut off a small piece of their cloak as an emblem of their sorrow.

The Affghauns, having the universal expectation of being restored to existence, call their cemeteries "The City of the Silent;" and the Moravians name theirs "God's Ground." It has been truly remarked, that a burying-place is "the field of God, sown with the seeds of the resurrection;" but the Quakers, at their funerals, allow

no consecration of the ground, no mourning, no service—the body is laid down in their meeting-house, while they all wait to see whether any one be inclined to speak; afterwards it is rested for a similar purpose on the edge of the grave, and at last, the bearers, silently laying it in the great gulf of mankind, retire, moving away as noiselessly as they came. No pompous panegyric is permitted over those in death, who in life looked not for the praise of men, therefore are their tombstones also silent. In allusion to these customs, the following appropriate lines are written by Bernard Barton, the only Quaker poet who has, at all successfully, attempted poetry:—

But be our burial-grounds, as should become,
 A simple, but a not unfeeling race;
 Let them appear, to outward semblance, dumb,
 As best befits the quiet dwelling-place
 Appointed for the prisoners of grace,
 Who wait the promise by the Gospel given—
 When the last trump shall sound—the trembling base
 Of tombs, of temples, pyramids, be riven,
 And all the dead arise before the hosts of heaven!
 Oh! in that awful hour, of what avail
 Unto the “spiritual body” will be found
 The costliest canopy, or proudest tale
 Recorded on it?—

As the first possession obtained by the children of Israel in the land of promise was a tomb, it *served as a fitting memorial that they, as well as*

all their successors on the earth, were strangers and pilgrims; whose wanderings, though prolonged for forty years or upwards, continually tended to a close. Not a grave was ever opened in the world till sin poisoned our nature, and not another shall be opened after sin is destroyed; but though in the mean while we lay our Christian friends in their tombs with mourning and tears, yet we know that they shall be summoned thence with joy, for the dead are not dead, only removed to another and better abode.

Nothing is dead ; nay, nothing sleeps ; each soul
That ever animated human clay
Now wakes—is on the wing.

The very name of Cemetery means a sleeping-place, called so by Christians, because to them the grave is no more than a bed of temporary rest, where man is humbled into the dust for a time, in order that he may afterwards be exalted for ever. Though we must leave our buried friends in the grave, yet not one sleeping atom shall be forgot, as a merciful Creator does not even then forsake them, but shall call them from the grave at the awful period which St. Paul so emphatically calls “that day.”

The shorter an epitaph is, the better; and one of the most pleasing on record is that mentioned in Hamilton's *America*, where he observed a

grave, covered by a simple stone, bearing no date, but merely this very striking inscription: —

“ My Mother.

The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall arise.”

When that exemplary Christian monarch George the Third was erecting at Windsor the tomb for his family, in which he and so many of his illustrious descendants have since been interred, Wyattville, the architect, apologised, after bringing the plans for inspection, that it should be necessary to obtrude so melancholy a subject upon his Majesty's attention; to which the good King replied, “ I shall attend with as much pleasure to the building of a tomb to receive me when I am dead, as I would to the decoration of a drawing-room to hold me while living; for, Mr. Wyattville, if it please God that I shall live to be 90 or 100 years old, I am willing to stay; but if it please God to take me this night, I am ready to obey the summons.”

In ancient times many Christian burying-places were used as a receptacle for secret meetings in times of persecution; and the subterraneous catacombs at Rome were necessary as a hiding-place for the living as well as for the dead. There the martyrs were buried along with the instruments of their torture, and there also those who were willing to be martyrs assembled clandestinely to

pray. Sometimes a leaden tablet was placed beside the body of a deceased person, containing an account of his martyrdom, or a bronze lamp, intended to betoken a belief of his immortality; but most frequently the ancient Christians interred in the coffin, with their deceased friends, the possession which in life they had most valued, a copy of the Holy Scriptures. It was a judicious rule among the ancient Greeks and Romans which might, perhaps, be advantageously adopted still, that those spendthrifts who wasted their patrimony were not to be buried in the sepulchre of their fathers.

Christians, unlike the Jews, who buried without the city, lay their deceased friends near a church, that in our devotions we may associate the memory of those who are gone with the remembrance of Christ's death, and of our rising again; of Christ's resurrection, and of the resurrection of every redeemed soul to glory, honour, and immortality. "The sensations of pious cheerfulness which attend the celebration of Sunday," says Wordsworth, "are profitably chastened by beholding the graves of kindred and friends gathered together in that general home, towards which the thoughtful yet happy spectators themselves are journeying."

On to God's house the people rest,
Passing the place where each must rest,
Each enter'd like a welcome guest.

In a paper of the Spectator by Addison, on the tombs at Westminster Abbey, a passage occurs, the beautiful train of thought expressed in which cannot be read without creating admiration and interest. "When I look upon the tombs of the great, all envy dies in me; when I meet with the grief of parents on a tombstone, my heart melts with compassion: when I see the tomb of the parents themselves, I consider the vanity of grieving for those whom we must quickly follow. When I see kings lying by those who deposed them; when I consider rival wits placed side by side, or the holy men that divided the world by their contests and disputes, I reflect with sorrow and astonishment on the little competitions, factions, and debates of mankind. When I read the several dates on the tombs of some that died yesterday, and some six hundred years ago, I consider that great day, when we shall all of us be contemporaries, and make our appearance together."

It seems the natural desire of all men to be remembered after death, and to be commemorated by some standing proof that they shall not be forgotten by the survivors. Though monuments themselves must perish, and even marble turns in time to decay, yet all men grasp at the hope of being "honourably immortalised," as it is called, after death. Nay, it is remarkable, that persons whose lives have been the most insignificant are

not exempt from this feeling, and appear often the most eagerly desirous of having some enduring monument to preserve their memory from oblivion. The insects of a summer hour dream of undying honours to their memory, and look to future generations for an imaginary existence in their recollection. The fine old cathedrals and churches of England are continually disfigured by laudatory inscriptions in honour of men who lived unknown to fame, and might as well have died unnoticed ; but their tombs are proportioned to their wealth rather than their merit. In more ancient countries, where stones were first taught to speak, and in too many instances to tell untruths, the broken urns and nameless pyramids of Greece and Egypt sadly prove that the foundation of our monuments, as well as of our earthly houses, is in the dust : " Lost as a billow in th' unbounded main."

Who, in ancient times, could have anticipated that in these modern days the column of Trajan would be surmounted by the statue of St. Peter ! Celebrity is said often to follow those who fly from it, and generally to fly from those who pursue it ; and in very unexpected ways it is often obtained. The burial of Monk Lewis, who died in an obscure vessel returning from the West Indies, having been described by the powerful verse of Byron, procured him more notoriety than even the most popular of his own works. When

Monk Lewis, supposed to have been poisoned by his negro servant, was buried in the ocean, one end of a white sheet which had been wrapped round his hammock became loose, the wind expanded its folds, and the coffin, after floating nearly round the ship, with this extraordinary sail, steered off towards Havannah, disappearing by degrees from the awe-struck spectators, not one of whom ever forgot the unexpected circumstance attending his obsequies, nothing similar to which having ever occurred in any case.

It is very singular to observe the variety of feelings with which a stranger stands gazing amidst the innumerable emblems, figures, and devices, raised to commemorate the spot where mourning relatives formerly sighed their last farewell over the buried dead. We read that a Roman cobbler thought no more of Cæsar's statue than to use it as a block on which to hammer his work. In Copenhagen the inhabitants have tea parties beside the tombs of their friends, during which they enjoy a scene of cheerful festivity. There the remains are still extant of a singular monument, appropriately named "The weeping Eye," being a statue placed over a spring of water, so contrived that a flood of tears is continually pouring forth to the memory of — —, no living mortal now can say whom. The idea was *ingenious*, and not unlike that of a Frenchman

some years ago, when he threw ink into all the *jets d'eau* in his garden, that they might wear mourning for his mother.

Every thing earthly is deficient in what the courtiers reminded their king was the only addition wanted to his glory, "Continuance." What are the dead of a thousand years ago to us? Not more than we are to them. The wind hath passed over them, and they are gone. With the events of this world those who died yesterday have no more to do than with the events before the flood, and little does it matter to one but recently consigned to the tomb whether his transitory life, now passed away, was one of joy or of sorrow; whether prosperity or adversity followed in his track; whether he died in the bloom of youth or survived to the uttermost verge of human existence; whether a monument has been raised to him on the earth or in the moon. All has passed away, and only the motives that influenced his actions now belong to the man himself; but these will abide on his soul for ever. "How many sleep who kept the world awake!" and how soon the most obstreperous trumpet of fame becomes silent; yet if all men filled as large a space in the public eye as they not only wish, but expect, how many very great men there would be, for almost every man thinks his own merits most unjustly undervalued. A Mr. Hobart not many years

since left 4000*l.* to raise an equestrian statue in honour of himself; and if to be remembered with a smile of derision be any object, he certainly succeeded. A few months since an old bed-ridden nursery-maid, who had probably beguiled many a weary hour by anticipating her own posthumous greatness, bequeathed a hundred pounds to be expended on the decorations of her own funeral. If she could have beheld in a vision the long mile of empty mourning coaches, "with gloomy garniture of purchas'd wo," which conducted her to the grave, the utmost ambition of her departed spirit might for one single hour have been amply gratified. The late Lady William Gordon, conscious that monuments being now universal have ceased to bestow celebrity, left a curious bequest to commemorate her own memory : she requested her executors to distribute at the door of her parish church, at Temple-Newsome, the family residence, at random among the people, as the congregation dispersed, a thousand sovereigns — an event which will no doubt be handed down traditionally among the inhabitants as long as the noble mansion stands.

The desire to be remembered is common to the greatest as well as to the most inferior natures, and perhaps that ambition is more to be respected than a cold indifference, such as was expressed on a monument, the inscription upon which I copied

lately, in the old churchyard of Charlecote, in Warwickshire. The deceased seems to have snapped his fingers at the world as he left it, and thus are his feelings expressed after living on the earth eighty-one years, and evidently leaving it in no very good humour: —

“ Farewell proud, vain, false, treacherous world, we have
seen enough of thee,
We value not what thou canst say of we ! ”

Posthumous fame was characterised by Scott the commentator as the veriest bubble that ever cheated man of his happiness here or hereafter; but posthumous usefulness is an object worthy of the noblest efforts — worthy the earnest desire of a Christian who knows that for posthumous usefulness the Divine Saviour permitted himself to be sacrificed, and died that we might live.

The affecting lines of Henry Kirke White on the prospect of his own death will find a chord of answering sympathy in every well-constituted nature; and only a mind as elevated as his would have so under-estimated his own claim to a niche in the recollection of posterity: —

—— I shall sink,
As sinks a stranger in the crowded streets
Of busy London! Some short bustle's caused,
A few inquiries, and the crowds close in,
And all's forgotten. On my grassy grave
'The men of future times will careless tread,

And read my name upon the sculptured stone ;
Nor will the sound familiar to their ears
Recall my vanish'd memory I did hope
For better things ! —

Keats, too, as gifted in genius and as early summoned to the grave, desired that his only epitaph should consist of these words: " Here lies one whose name was writ on water."

It appears as if this craving for posthumous honour might be made conducive not only to the due commemoration of the dead, but to the good of the living, if the thousands now so often lavished on empty panegyrics and masses of tasteless marble were consecrated to the glory of God and the good of men, by the erection or endowment of something useful to society. Of this there are several admirable examples. That exemplary but most unostentatious benefactress of the Church, Miss Coutts, besides giving 60,000*l.* to endow two colonial bishoprics, has recently founded, with the most liberal endowment, an asylum for the reformation of females, and devoted also 30,000*l.* to rearing a magnificent church, commemorative of her earthly father's memory, as well as to the glory of her Father in Heaven. When the excellent Bishop Ryder died, a church in a poor part of Birmingham, the largest city in his diocese, was erected as the best tribute to his memory. At York the name of Wilberforce, so

long the honoured representative of that county, is commemorated by a nobly-endowed blind asylum — a most suitable memorial to the Christian statesman, the generous philanthropist, and the bright example of every domestic excellence. At Leeds, too, may be seen on the walls of a church recently built the following very touching notice of one who lived for the good, though not for the praise, of others, but obtained both in their utmost measure at her death, as the inscription testifies : — “ This church, dedicated to God by the name of St. Andrew the Apostle, was erected by subscription in 1844, in affectionate regard to the memory of Helen Elizabeth, wife of William Sinclair, M. A., as a permanent memorial of those zealous and persevering labours of Christian love to which, in this district, she devoted, with consistent piety, her short, but exemplary life.’

It would be well, perhaps, if the dying would distinctly express their wish to be commemorated by any charitable work or endowment — not to be conspicuously inscribed on the gilded rent-roll of some over-grown useless hospital or asylum, some large, ostentatious, purse-proud endowment for idle old women, or for boys, raised out of their proper sphere, to lead a life of contempt for their own natural position, of unfitness for subordinate duties, and indifference to their own relatives.

but some object should be promoted of unquestionable usefulness and sound philanthropy.

A committee of trustees for the erection of a so-called charitable institution near Edinburgh was appointed lately by a deceased miser, who would scarcely have given a single shilling during his life to keep any of his innumerable legatees from starving, but was found to have bequeathed about 500,000*l.* to celebrate his own name as the founder of an institution for mismanaging the education of boys. A most gorgeous plan being submitted to a committee for the architectural elevation of this building, some of the managers objected to its costing so enormous a sum; but one of the trustees, remarkable on all occasions for acuteness, carried the question by this remark: — “Our business here is, as much as possible, to fulfil the wishes of the testator; therefore, as he had evidently no other object than ostentation, the more ostentatious and extravagant we make this building, the more in accordance it will be with his intentions.” It is well known, in respect to Gillespie’s institution for the splendid maintenance of twelve old women, that the aged legatees having nothing to do but quarrel, made ample use of their leisure for enjoying the only excitement in their power, and discarded so constantly, that, the scene of their vituperation being generally on a narrow bridge across the stream

near their dwelling, twelve bridges had to be built for their separate accommodation.

After our hearts are put in readiness for leaving this world, every rightly-constituted mind will proceed, like Hezekiah, to "set his house in order," by preparing a considerably arranged will, dictated by conscience and good feeling. It gives a man the last opportunity he shall ever have of acting well or ill in this world — the last opportunity to testify his affection for those who shall survive — the last opportunity to do a work of charity, to leave a message of kindness, or to bestow a token of love. Shall all these occasions be neglected, or worse than lost, by being used with carelessness and caprice? The first dying testament we read of was Abraham's, who carefully settled the affairs of his own family when about to expire; but too many in succeeding generations have delayed making their wills, as men delay their repentance, till too late. Such persons, instead of bequeathing, as they might have done, an inheritance of competence and comfort to those who loved them, only seem to throw a firebrand at parting among survivors, by causing a series of endless discords, and of ruinous litigation. There are not certainly many with so salutary a fear of contest as Sir Walter Scott, who said that he should be sorry to let his best friend know how

much he would consent to lose before having recourse to a law-suit.

Too many seem to die, as well as to live, according to the tenor of that selfish French proverb, "Après moi le déluge." It is a pleasure to observe that the English language does not afford a proverb of equal egotism and selfishness, so we must borrow it from our neighbours. In nothing may so much bad feeling and practical infidelity be traced as in that last act of a man's influence on earth, the dictating of his will. How little real desire there is in the world to do good!—and the only object with many seems, by making their money as useless as possible, to punish those who take the liberty of surviving. Many friends on such an occasion have been astonished, who thought they knew the testator better, and find him betraying causeless caprice, vain ostentation, heartless ingratitude, or long-cherished revenge, when he has left, as his final achievement upon earth, a record of intentions which, until he was hid under the dark eclipse of death, he would have been ashamed to let any man hear; yet before a last will can be executed, the testator, who is answerable for its contents, has already appeared in the visible presence of God. A gentleman of fortune, who was attended night and day throughout a long and dreadful illness by the friend who had been his kind and disinterested

companion from boyhood to mature years, lately died, bequeathing nothing to the faithful friend to whom he had owed his happiest days, and who he knew had a family to rear on scanty means, but left 20,000*l.* to a child he never saw.

The evil of events is not in themselves, but in us; for when the winding up of life takes place at last, how little we shall care what were the trials or the injuries hitherto endured. They will then appear of no more consequence than the remembrance an invalid retains what were the medicines necessary for him to take that he might obtain a cure. Small indeed is the portion of real misery or happiness conveyed to us by mere external objects; for all depends on the inward discipline of the mind, and on learning no more to murmur at the loss of any blessing than if our own parents had sent a brother or sister to take it away. A discontented spirit cannot be soothed or satisfied by mere prosperity any more than a velvet shoe can cure the gout, a diamond tiara relieve a headache, or a bed of down quiet the restlessness of fever.

It should be our care, if possible, to leave little memorials of our affection to surviving friends, that each of those with whom we were closely connected by the ties of blood or of friendship may cherish a kindly recollection of our name. It is like shaking hands at parting, and all that

remains for those we leave behind is a recollection and a name: but nothing is more remarkable than the little influence that years of friendly association produce in testamentary good will; and, also, that if any one promises a legacy to a friend, there is scarcely an instance of the promise being kept.

It becomes, through the softening influence of time, one of our dearest pleasures, and one of our strongest ties between surviving friends, to converse on past happy days, and to recall together the cherished image of those who once loved us, and prayed for us, and whose last hours it was our duty and our highest privilege to console.

Ah! till we share your joys, forgive our grief!

Remembrance is as natural and as dear to the old as hope is to the young; and though some may long to die, none would consent to forget those they once loved. Memory may cast a deeper shade over our moments of depression, and tame down the brightness of our joys, yet none would part with the cherished remembrance of kind friends and happy days long since departed, which live now only in our own solitary recollection. We believe, however, and know that, as long as our thoughts are merely looking downwards among the confused wheels and turnings of second causes, we must be dissatisfied and miser-

able at whatever is adverse to our wishes ; but if day by day we read onwards in the events of our own history, we shall gain increasing confidence from experience, that all its apparent disarrangement is deliberately appointed for a special purpose, even though the vanished anchor of hope be removed from this world to rest in another and a better.

Dwelling on such thoughts as these will make us ready and willing at last to go where our lost companions are waiting for us to join them, in that world which can scarcely seem strange or new when we know it to be peopled by so many whom we have seen and loved, all assembled together now, and never more to shed a farewell tear.

And if the dead on this dull world may gaze,
To breathe a blessing round our troubled ways ;
If by some ministry, to man unknown,
They still can make a human wish their own,
And wander round, ineffably serene,
That unforgotten home, where life has been,
Spirit eternal ! often gaze on me,
And soothe the pang that so remembers thee !

R. MONTGOMERY.

CHAP. XIX.

THE SELF-INDULGENCE OF MAN TO BE CORRECTED
BY THE DISCIPLINE FORCED UPON HIM AMIDST THE
SORROWS OF LIFE.

Once in the flight of ages past
There liv'd a man—and who was he?
—Mortal! howe'er thy lot be cast,
That man resembled thee.

Unknown the region of his birth,
The land in which he died unknown—
His name has perish'd from the earth—
This truth survives alone—

That joy and grief, and hope and fear,
Alternate triumph'd in his breast,
His bliss and woe—a smile and tear—
Oblivion hides the rest.

He suffer'd—but his pangs are o'er;
Enjoy'd—but his delights are fled;
Had friends—his friends are now no more;
And foes—his foes are dead.

He saw whatever thou hast seen;
Encounter'd all that troubles thee;
He was—whatever thou hast been;
He is—what thou shalt be. MONTGOMERY.

THE most fervent prayer of Wesley always was,
“Lord, let me not live to be useless;” and cer-

tainly if every man now leading an utterly useless life were suddenly to disappear, the population of this world would be exceedingly diminished; yet if we knew how to estimate our privileges, there is none in which God grants us a prerogative so nearly resembling his own as in the power and in the pleasure of doing good. How deeply, therefore, should we value every opportunity afforded us, and how anxiously should we often examine whether we are laying up for the day of judgment a bank of right feelings, or a treasure of wrath, and whether those with whom we associate are the better or the worse of our having lived amongst them.

The pious and excellent Archbishop Usher's last words were, "O Lord forgive me—especially my sins of omission." Such a prayer from such a man should admonish us carefully to despatch every work that remains to be done on earth, considering the heavy weight it may be on our death-beds to remember one neglected duty. When a passenger, after he has embarked for a long voyage, and the ship is already under sail, remembers that he omitted to settle, before leaving the shore, some important affair, the shock to him must of course be great; but how much severer would it be in a dying moment, when least able to bear any agitating thought, if he were startled by recollecting that some action essential to his

own welfare or to the good of others had been forgotten, never more to be remedied?

It is a moment, terrible, indeed, to the heart of man, when he gazes for the last time on the countenance of a departing friend; but nothing aggravates so acutely the grief of separation as to remember any duty of conscience or affection to him which during life was omitted. Nothing then is so consolatory as the testimony of a peaceful conscience, that we did all in our power to promote the happiness, temporal and eternal, of those who are gone. To look on the face of a deceased friend, feeling the reproach on our hearts of having neglected any means by which he might in a past or future life have been benefited, would be one of the most disconsolate emotions which the mind of man could conceive.

It is very remarkable, that when our Divine Saviour speaks of those who were destroyed at the deluge, he does not advert to their more heinous crimes, but he describes the people as being entirely given up to worldly interests, while they left every duty undone till too late. There was no actual sin in "eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage," but the devoting of their whole time, thoughts, and affections, to these things, constituted the offence. Thus we learn that occupations and pleasures allowable in moderation, philosophy, politics,

painting, music, or science, become, when they engross the heart, utterly sinful. In our natural existence the things most advantageous and innocent become, when carried to excess, the most destructive. Water, fire, food, and medicine, are all essential to life, and even wine is recommended in Holy Scripture to Timothy, for his infirmities, yet each of these when used in extreme destroys life; and thus even the mental enjoyments and higher pursuits of existence, if they occupy such time and thought as are due to God only, may injure and finally destroy the soul.

Satan holds out to every sinner the promise of long impunity, and of ample time to repair all that he now neglects. Thus a usurer promises those who run in his debt that they shall never be hurried in paying, till the miserable victim has been enticed onwards to irretrievable ruin, for heaven will probably be filled with those who obeyed the first call to repentance, and hell with those who delayed it to a more convenient season. "The tempter," observes St. Ambrose, "showed all the glory of the earth in the twinkling of an eye, which shall vanish too in the twinkling of an eye."

Nothing certainly in this panorama of life is worth valuing for itself, but only God for himself; and if our affections were but fixed half as earnestly on the giver of every good, as on the gift

itself, we should glide easily through the cares of this uncertain, never-quiet life, with a faith even more solidly founded than the rocky strata of the earth, and almost as much concealed from ordinary eyes—a foundation which no vicissitude of this world can shake, nor death itself destroy.

All men consider themselves poor on what they have already attained; yet the most miserable are those who, being accustomed to the highest pinnacle of earthly desire, “stretched on the rack of a too easy chair,” see nothing left to wish, and often the vicious excesses of great men may be considered “the riot of ambition in despair.” Yet as the more we possess the more we desire, and as when fortune increases so do our wishes, these become at last so boundless, that the happiest of men still send their desires forward to empty hopes of future felicity; though nothing is more wretchedly mistaken than a boundless ardour for unalloyed happiness in this world, as mortal joy is always deficient to an immortal spirit.

Be still, sad heart! and cease repining;
Behind the clouds is the sun still shining.

LONGFELLOW.

Heathen authors inculcate the duty of holding every earthly object in subservience to the interests of the soul, by describing, in colours of growing eloquence, the pains of Tartarus and the blessings of Elysium. Charon is mentioned as

refusing any mortal admission to his boat until every worldly possession be laid aside; and such a lesson might be admirably applied by the Christian to himself, when he also is about to be ferried over the abyss between time and eternity.

The pagan poet intimates that the monarch is enjoined to throw off his diadem, the rhetorician must quench his eloquence, and the maiden must part with her beauty, before the ruthless ferryman will convey them to Elysium. It may be in allusion, perhaps, to this heathen tradition that the following beautiful hymn was written by Mrs. Southey:—

Launch thy bark, mariner—
Christian, God speed thee!
Let loose the rudder bands—
Good angels lead thee!

Set thy sails warily,
Tempests will come,
Steer thy course steadily,
Christian steer home.

Look to the weather-bow,
Breakers are round thee,
Let fall the plummet now,
Shallows may ground thee.

Reef in the foresail there,
Hold the helm fast,
So—let the vessel wear—
There swept the blast.

How! gains the leak so fast?
Clear out the hold—
Hoist up thy merchandise,
Heave out thy gold—

There—let the ingots go—
Now the ship rights;
Hurra! the harbour's near---
Lo! the red lights!

Slacken not sail yet,
At inlet or island;
Straight for the beacon steer,
Straight for the high-land.

Crowd all thy canvas on,
Cut through the foam—
Christian! cast anchor now—
Heaven is thy home.

No Christian, certainly, would hesitate to disengage himself from every earthly encumbrance which could by possibility hinder his acceptance into a better life. On the contrary, he would be impatient to shake it off, with the same energy and abhorrence that St. Paul exhibited when he shook off into the fire that viper which clung round his hand. When Sir Thomas More felt himself, for conscience sake, obliged to resign being Chancellor, he said, "I have now obtained what from a child I have continually wished—that being forced from business and public affairs, I might live for a time to God and myself."

It is well for mankind that in the course of our existence the blessings we lose are not to be voluntarily laid down, but health, fortune, friends, or life itself, are all wrenched away, whether we consent or not, by the Almighty hand of God himself, who does us good thus against our wills, who in this way compels us into being alienated from the world, and who on these occasions, as on all others, teaches us better than we could teach ourselves.

If asked, like Abraham, to make a voluntary sacrifice of all we most love upon earth, even a Christian might hesitate, and shrink back from so trying an ordeal. To submit with unquestioning resignation after the blow has been struck is in itself a strong effort of faith; but would it not fearfully aggravate the test of Christian obedience, were the disciples, as well as the ancient patriarch, enjoined actively, as well as passively, to sacrifice their dearest earthly hopes!

Our Almighty Creator himself voluntarily gave up his own Son to suffering and to death for us, but his mercy induces him forcibly to take what it is necessary we should lose. If needful, God even produces a bankruptcy of our whole earthly prospects, while he assigns to us the comparatively easy duty of saying in humble, though often with most sorrowful, resignation, "Thy will, O God! be done!"

Lord of the just! thou gav'st the bitter cup—
We bow to thy behest, and drink it up.

Most truly is it said, that strong affections are productive of strong afflictions, and many, most naturally, have been overawed by reading in Holy Scripture how very great have commonly been the sufferings of all God's most favoured people—the children of Israel; the apostles; the martyrs; no exemption was allowed even for Lazarus, the chosen friend of Christ:—"he whom thou lovest is sick!" We must expect, like those gone before, whatever discipline should necessarily be endured, before we are perfectly modelled into a fitness for taking our places beside those favoured and selected servants of the Most High God, who loved much, and suffered much.

If in this bosom aught but thee
Encroaching sought a boundless sway,
Omniscience could the danger see,
And mercy take the cause away.

No real Christian will saunter listlessly through life, because to him each moment abounds in motive and occupation. Every book he opens is read with a view to enlarge his knowledge of God and man; every landscape he admires reminds him of that better country for which he is preparing; in every created object he bails the manifestation

of an omnipresent Deity. Every bird that sings, and every flower that blooms, is a memorial of the Creator who formed them; every hour of solitude is cheered by meditation; every moment in society is enlivened by the desire to benefit his own mind, or that of others; every joy among his friends is to him a source of unenvying pleasure, every sorrow an opportunity to exercise his kindly affections. If he sleep, it is that he may be the more active when he rises; if he eats or drinks, it is chiefly to strengthen him for his work; and after the very shortest interval of prayer, he remembers new blessings for which to return his fervent thanks. I was touched and gratified lately, being present by accident, when a little boy, only seven years old, said his prayers at his mother's knee. Having been allowed always to add anything which occurred to himself, his lovely young face glowed with a look of devotion and gratitude, which I have often since remembered with interest, when he began by saying, in an earnest solemn tone of gratitude, which older people might often do well to imitate, "O God! I thank thee for giving me such a *very* happy day."

The selfish and idle only are those who suffer the pangs of ennui, or who feel oppressed by the weight of time; but the Christian considers every hour a charge from God, for the use of

which he is answerable, and for which he must deliberately prepare to give an account. Happiness is, in truth, a thing that lies out of our way, and which must be found by diligent seeking; for activity is the very soul of enjoyment, as well as the essence of true happiness. It prolongs health, it gives a zest to life; and as we know that the sea itself is preserved from corruption by ceaseless activity, so is the soul of man. Pleasures are like the shells gathered by children on the sea-shore; it is the gathering, not the keeping, which gives the delight. The greatest happiness of worldly men is to be ardent in some pursuit, whether it be wealth, fame, or usefulness; and nothing gives so much interest to life as the labour which is to support life; yet these objects, if listlessly aimed at, lose half their interest. How much more, then, does religion lose which must be either a heavy yoke, or our chief delight?

Those devoted to piety must not drone away their existence in heartless indolence, but they should, with the whole energy and zeal of their nature, grasp at all the peculiar blessings of religion. No man possibly could, till he has tried his own powers, estimate their prodigious extent in benefiting others, and in improving himself; therefore, if for a single moment a *Christian* be enticed into indolence, he will ever

return to his holy duties, as the needle, when forcibly veered for a time from the pole, relapses at once, when let loose, to its legitimate destination.

As distance lends enchantment to a view, so does absence rivet our affections on any long-vanished friend, giving a depth and pathos to the remembrance unknown before. Every token of kindness, every recollection of intercourse, becomes more cherished, each letter more prized, and every stranger more welcome, if he can tell us of those we love. Thus should Christians feel in the long absence of our best and truest friend, Jesus Christ, the Saviour of our benighted souls. Every thought of him should be interesting, every page of the Bible that tells of him attractive, and the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to fill our hearts with the love of Christ, should become especially welcome.

When we observe in spring that invisible but powerful influence by which the apparently dead plants and trees are suddenly restored to verdant life, bearing leaves, blossoms, and fruit in rich abundance, how beautifully that invisible and mysterious agency exemplifies the Holy Spirit's operations in the heart of man, which continues sterile and totally unproductive of any good, until an unseen but almighty influence melts the cold and frozen mind, causing it to bring forth the

blossoms of religious hope, and the fruits of a holy life.

The Bible announces as an incontrovertible fact that man is born to trouble, therefore sorrow must be an essential element of our existence: yet as the cup we are forced to drink is mingled with many undeserved mercies, let us, in perfect submission, drain it to the very dregs, conscious that the worst portion is added by our own selves, being the fruit of wilful sin, and of having wasted that time on this world which was given us to prepare for eternity in its awfulness and grandeur. The fear of difficulty or even of danger must be as nothing in the estimation of a Christian compared with the service of his Divine Master. It used to be said of the French, that every man in the nation considered himself a soldier, looked upon his king as his general, identified himself with his military glory, and considered his sovereign as representing the concentrated honour of the kingdom, while it was his own special object in existence to assist in preserving it. Thus should the Christian be ready to live or die for his faith, while every opposition as well as every danger should be overlooked in a spirit like that of King Alphonso, who replied, when his friends attempted to dissuade him from a very hazardous enterprise, — “I fear not danger! Who ever attained to victory without adventuring dangers?”

The whole world should be able to recognise in the conduct of Christians, that they carry about with them continually, not merely in the closet of their own consciences but in their external aspect and conduct, the impressive remembrance of God's fatherly superintendence, both to punish their faults, and to bless them with undeserved mercies. Too often has it been remarked, with justice, by heathens and infidels, when commenting on the conduct of those who call themselves Christians, "If those men believed as they teach, would they act as they do?" It is recorded of Mary Magdalen that "she loved much," but not that she professed much; and if at any time a sceptic be about to measure the faith of his neighbour, seeing is believing, for he will only allow that a tree which bears fruit may be what it is said to be, even though to him the root remain invisible. A black prince from Sierra Leone was converted to Christianity by observing as he said that "All good men read the Bible, and called it the Word of God, and all bad men neglected it."

If mortals think and act amiss, even with the check of some religious belief on their conduct, what would they be without its restraining influence! A more revolting idea of hell itself could scarcely be conceived than to imagine what any person of refined disposition would feel if condemned to live in this very world which we

inhabit, were it peopled with only the very worst of the human race, and were they to continue unrestrained by any laws of God and man. An eternity in such a scene would be fearful indeed. Even now, great as our sorrows may be, yet they are few compared with the little whips and stings continually inflicted by the selfishness or ill-humour or malignity of others, or the failure in our own conduct on account of those provocations which we consider undeserved. Let us be thankful and submissive, however, so long as the evil is external, and not in our own hearts. One of the most courageous acts with which the history of philanthropy has been adorned was when that single-hearted and single-handed Christian, Mrs. Fry, first caused herself to be locked in for some hours among the criminals at Newgate, where the jailor himself had warned her that he could not be safe; and yet, when introduced into the common-room, scarcely had she explained to the crowd of convicts her mission, before some of the most hardened were melted into tears at discovering that one so good and admirable as she still entertained a hope of salvation even for them. Each might have said, in the mournful language of the Patriarch, "No man cared for my soul;" but now they found that one of the brightest and best of Christians was still willing on their account to "hope all things, and to believe all things." A

tear of penitence from a hardened sinner is the sight at which the angels are known to rejoice, being the first harbinger to him who sheds it of everlasting happiness. While Christ during his agony in the garden sent his prayers up to heaven for the guilty, his tears also fell to the earth, for the afflictions and the crimes of human nature; and the greatest sorrow as well as the greatest crime of man is, to neglect this redemption of his Saviour. That is well expressed by the poet in language which may be remembered as long as the world lasts, with interest, and perhaps even long afterwards; for who can tell whether poetry shall not be eternal as well as music, friendly association, and many other innocent pleasures of our present state.

Free was the offer, free to all, of life
And of salvation; but the proud heart,
Because 'twas free, would not accept; and still
To merit wish'd; and choosing thus, unshipp'd,
Uncompass'd, unprovision'd, and bestorm'd,
To swim a sea of breadth immeasurable,
They scorn'd the goodly bark, whose wings the breath
Of God's eternal spirit fill'd for heaven,
That stopp'd to take them in, and so were lost.

POLLOCK.

CHAP. XX.

IDENTITY AND RECOGNITION OF INDIVIDUALS AFTER
DEATH.

Around me stretch'd the slumbers of the dead,
Whereof the silence ach'd upon mine ear ;
More and more noiseless did I make my tread,
And yet its echoes chill'd my heart with fear.

The former men of ev'ry age and place,
From all their wand'rings gather'd round me lay ;
The dust of wither'd empires did I trace,
And stood 'mid generations past away.

Unspoken tongues, perchance in praise or woe,
Were character'd on tablets time had swept,
And deep were half their letters hid below
The thick small dust of those they once had wept.

One place alone had ceas'd to hold its prey,
A form had press'd it, and was there no more ;
The garments of the grave beside it lay,
Where once they wrapp'd him on the rocky floor.

He only with returning footsteps broke
The eternal calm wherewith the tomb was bound ;
Among the sleeping dead alone he woke,
And bless'd with outstretch'd hands the host around.

Well is it that such blessing hovers near,
To soothe each sad survivor of the throng
Who haunt the portals of the solemn sphere,
And pour their woe the loaded air along.

They to the verge have follow'd what they love,
And on the insuperable threshold stand,
With cherish'd names its speechless calm reprove,
And stretch'd in the abyss their ungrasp'd hand.

All that have died, the earth's whole race repose,
Where death collects his treasures heap on heap ;
O'er each one's busy day the night-shades close,
Its actors, sufferers, schools, kings, armies, sleep. V.

It is most instructive in reading the memoirs of distinguished Christians to observe how entirely their own wills had been annihilated, and how sincerely they wished the will of God, and that only, to be done. If it were death itself, he had but to decree, while they seemed ready to obey, and willing to endure the tossings of one stormy night, if it brought them into their much-desired harbour. The Marquis of Argyll laid his head upon the block after desiring those around to recollect how timorous he had formerly been by nature. "But," he said, "the Lord has heard all my prayers, and removed all my fears. I could die now like a Roman, but I choose rather to die like a Christian."

The variety of ways in which a similar thought and feeling may be expressed might be curiously exemplified in the last sayings of nearly all devout Christians ; and thus, while we see the shades of death falling on the weary traveller, and the darkness of a long night closing over his head, in the

tomb of nature, still, when looking to the tomb of a risen Saviour, light breaks in amidst the shadows of death, and morning dawns over the dreary night of the grave. Bullinger of Zurich remarked with his expiring breath, "If Socrates was glad when his death approached, because he expected to go to Homer, to Hesiod, and to other learned men, how much more do I joy, who am sure that I shall see my Saviour, Jesus Christ."

The heathens had only a conjectural hope of meeting again, but the Christians an assured promise; yet in Pagan history what beautiful instances are recorded of the struggling soul asserting its own immortality, even in the very arms of death. Cicero spoke confidently of the pleasure he should have hereafter when associating with Cato; and Cyrus, when taking a last leave of his sons, said in his expiring agonies, "Think not that I shall hereafter be nowhere, or nothing." Every race of savages has indulged a joyous anticipation of unlimited felicity hereafter in the pleasures to which they were addicted, and many are buried with their implements of the chase, as an evidence of their expectation to renew once more the ardent pursuits of the field.

As it is generally understood to be a fundamental belief in all creeds, that a happy resurrection shall include the recognition of departed friends, the Christian does not allow himself to

say of those he once loved, that they are lost, for he knows them to be not parted long, and soon to part no more. It has been even conjectured by reflecting Christians, that in heaven every sinless peculiarity may hereafter remain in the various characters of our friends. In life they have been all identified by some peculiarities each as much their own as the features of their face, and in this world, on many occasions, we love our friends the more for their very faults. Who has not observed that, in talking of the absent or the lost, they are usually identified in our remembrance and in our affections, by their little eccentricities of manner and of conduct? for we smile at the recollection, and love them the more.

If all men were made as perfect hereafter as the angel Gabriel, no distinction of individuals would remain, but in this world, even after the descent of the Holy Spirit, to enlighten and to purify the apostles, each yet retained the singularities by which his disposition had been previously distinguished, while all displayed the same diversity of taste, of talent, and of pursuit. The energetic eagerness of St. Peter's character endears him to our sympathies, and we are pleased to trace the same fire and zeal in his writings; we should scarcely have heard of St. Thomas but for the slowness of his belief, and the gentleness of St. John renders him the chosen comforter of all who

need consolation. Whatever is sinful shall be purified from the character of a redeemed Christian, and not a fault be permitted to linger behind; yet while all shall be supremely devoted to God, there may be many characteristic diversities of thought and feeling.

Those who think vaguely of eternity have an idea of its being like a long dream. They imagine a scene of mere rest and inactivity without employment or association; yet nothing in Scripture is more clearly revealed than that we shall know each other, so that every individual might, after his resurrection, use these words which Christ spoke when he arose, "Behold it is I myself!" Yes! of every lamented friend and lost companion we may say, "These eyes shall behold him and not another."

The very same countenance which we gazed mournfully on for the last time before the coffin was closed, shall be welcomed to our eyes once more in a scene of unutterable happiness. As if awakened from a long sleep the dead shall rise, "the same and not another." We shall joyfully recognise that this was the brother, the sister, or the friend once so dear to us on earth; for whom we prayed while they lived and wept when they died, and whom to see again has been the longing desire of our hearts ever since. In reference to this subject, Luther said to his friends at supper

the night before he expired, "Adam was in a deep sleep when God formed Eve, yet when he awoke and saw her, he asked not what she was, nor whence she came, but said she was flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone. How did he know that? Being full of the Holy Ghost and endowed with the knowledge of God he spoke thus." Peter, James, and John also, on the mount of transfiguration, at once recognised Moses and Elias by intuition; and St. Paul expressly tells the Thessalonians, that if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. He urges this as a topic of consolation to the disciples, then mourning under the loss of friends, therefore it is plain that they were to see them, recognise them, and be with them for ever.

We have an interesting testimony to the reliance placed on the recognition of departed friends in the conclusion of a letter by St. Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, written 1600 years ago, to the church of that city on occasion of a pestilence, as follows:—

"Finally we should ever carry it in our thoughts, and improve it into a standing principle, that we have solemnly renounced the world, and therefore, whilst we continue in it, we should behave like strangers and pilgrims. Hence we should thankfully welcome that happy day which

is to fix us each in our proper habitation, to rescue us from the various embarrassments of the world, to disengage us from its perplexities and snares, and to restore us to a state of paradise and to the kingdom of heaven. Who among us, if he had been long a sojourner in a foreign land, would not desire to return to his native country? Who when he had begun to sail thither would not wish a prosperous wind to carry him home with expedition, that he might the sooner embrace his friends and relatives. We now should account paradise our proper country, as we have already begun to reckon the patriarchs our fathers, and therefore should be fond of hastening to the sight of that country, to the embraces of our parents and friends. There friends and parents, and brethren and children without number wait for us, and long to congratulate our happy arrival. They are in secure possession of their own felicity, and wait only the accession of ours to finish and complete it. How great must we then conceive will be our common joy, upon the transport of our meeting together in those blessed abodes! How unutterable must be the pleasures of the kingdom of heaven, which have no alloy from any danger of their discontinuance, but are sure and immutable for evermore, as having eternity added to the highest degree of bliss! There we shall meet with the glorious choir of the apostles,

with the goodly company of the prophets, with an innumerable multitude of holy martyrs; who, agreeably to the commands of Christ, have wrought their several works of righteousness, and are honoured with their crowns of victory. To this delightful society, and to Christ who is the head of it, let us hasten upon the wings of desire and of a holy love; and let God and Christ observe that this is the main object of our wishes, and the sum of our most ardent hopes."

When St. Cyprian, soon after writing this letter, was dying, he said, "Let him only fear death, who must pass from this death to a second death. I thank God for freeing me from the prison of this body."

The Christian's hope in future felicity may be said almost to annihilate the intervening time of endurance, during which it is to him as cheerful and reviving as the sun in an Arctic region, and it raises his mind far above the fleeting clouds of vicissitude in this world. He is thus enabled to see through the thin veil that hides its real insignificance, and the desires which once engrossed his whole interest; he estimates as he does the trifling pleasures of his childhood, which have become objects of contempt to his own after-thoughts.

In Greece when any customer enters a shop, it is usual for the merchant to utter a short benediction

on his visitor, saying, "May the secret wishes of your soul be granted!" and if any one devoted to this world only, could be obliged faithfully to write down a list of all the objects in life, which he considers in his private mind most essential to his own happiness, how contemptible in the meanwhile, and how unsatisfactory in the ultimate result, would every man's secret desire appear in the eyes of his neighbour. Let each living individual be permitted to try the experiment of perfect earthly happiness, on the plan he likes best, and it will only serve to convince him of its utter futility.

"What a miracle to man is man!" Some would think their lives well spent in rendering their own names pre-eminent in the little world of their acquaintances, and yet they would be ready, on receiving a trifling inheritance, to change it for another, which they would become at once equally anxious to inscribe on the records of fame. It might be a weekly lesson to every individual, how very little mere celebrity is to be desired without corresponding merit, when we consider that no one is more frequently remembered than Pontius Pilate, whose name has to be mentioned every Sunday in every church throughout all England. In truth, any who are said to have attained to immortality in the memory of mankind, are but very seldom the subjects of thought

or conversation, and have no reason to rejoice in what is gained if it be by the smallest sacrifice of principle, of truth, or even of Christian humility. The spendthrift passes his days in a continual scramble for more than he is entitled to possess, and will think his life well-spent in squandering on luxury what it was a dishonesty to borrow ; and the miser, on the contrary, relinquishes all that is precious here or hereafter, in order to have a larger amount of income registered in his banker's book, which he never will see and cannot have the heart to use : and unless the sum a man dies worth were recorded on his tombstone, there seems little object in his denying himself every relaxation of heart which a generous spirit can so truly enjoy, in order to leave his hoards among those whose very lives he would scarcely while alive himself have cared to save if it cost him a shilling. If the miser, in his last hour were offered a year more of life, on condition that he would forfeit at the end all those hoards which he has wasted his whole existence in accumulating, and die without a sixpence, he would then grasp at such a proposal, and give away for a year's reprieve what he has sacrificed his salvation to acquire.

One of the most amiable of those worldly desires to which men devote their whole sum of earthly existence, and that which seems most certain to be disappointed, is the wish to be

universally esteemed and liked. Many a kind heart, made in nature's best mould, has been shrivelled and withered by the disappointing result of a long continued and anxious endeavour very generally to please. The kindest dispositions have oftenest been chagrined into misanthropy, unless the grace of God prevented so pernicious a result, by finding how sharp is the sting of meeting with ingratitude. Only those who endeavour to be kind and generous to others can experience the pain that usually follows; and only those who do so from motives far higher than any worldly inducement can experience the real happiness of doing good. As long as men look for prodigious returns of gratitude to every deposit they make of kindness or generosity on behalf of others, there must be a degree of selfishness in the motive; but to do whatever God puts in their power in order to please God rather than man, secures its own reward in the consciousness of a duty done, and preserves us from every painful feeling of after-irritation against those we have been permitted the happiness to serve.

How few live up to their full powers of being useful! and as Lord Bacon recommends, "make more opportunities than they find!" If the desire to do good have degenerated into a love of power or of display, it deserves no success; and

the best of men require often to examine whether those actions that seem the most praiseworthy proceed from love to God and to their neighbour, or merely from a love of patronage and influence. Heroism, self-denial, and magnanimity, in all instances where they do not spring from a principle of religion, are but splendid altars, on which we sacrifice one kind of self-love to another; and most solemnly true at the end will it be in some instances, that many who seem first in the eyes of men shall be last in heaven, and there the last may be first.

No human laws ever attempted, like the Bible, to control the thoughts, and even the motives, as well as the actions, yet many live as unconscious of responsibility as if walking in their sleep. Too many act as carelessly as if, whether they wished it or not, God would infallibly conduct them into heaven; but, as his own people shall hereafter differ from the people of this world, so must they in piety and excellence differ from them here. They must endeavour to diffuse religious happiness, and to attain to practical usefulness by diligently testifying in their own conduct how religion purifies and augments the sources of human enjoyment; and since everything in life must be practised perseveringly before we excel in it, God appoints that an heir of heaven must pursue every step of his career in that direction,

and that on earth we must lead a holy life preparatory to a holy eternity.

The frequently recurring choice we make in seeming trifles forms in the end our character, while conscience often resisted becomes at last an abdicated monarch, which ceases to have any voice in the internal government of the mind. An interesting allegory in the Spectator represents the power of habit by describing a man who walks, fancying himself quite at liberty, while Habit follows behind, and frequently slips over him unnoticed an additional chain. Thus experience shows that sinful customs, adding link to link, constitute the chain of evil coiled round the victim of Satan, while every bad action adds another and another band to that imprisonment which enthrals the soul; on the contrary when connected with religion habit is indeed a blessing, and may be considered like the grasp of the Almighty on our immortal spirit, binding it more closely to his service and to himself.

Our whole lives are spent in opportunities of choosing between good and evil, but one sin, habitually indulged, binds the whole soul, and, like a manacle on one limb, it fetters the entire spirit in our approaches to God; it might be compared in its disastrous effects on the mind, to the practice of those very skilful thieves who first introduce a little boy into a dwelling-house, and

then he opens the door for all who choose to come in. Those who cannot live well to-day will be still less fitted to live well to-morrow, for every step, either in grace or in sin, helps us to make the next; and we have the evidence of all those who have tried the pleasures of this world in their most sinful excesses, that they soon produce satiety and weariness, but never bring permanent happiness. The best and wisest of men, on the contrary, have declared that they find it truly, permanently, and in a daily increasing degree, by cultivating a constant, unhesitating will to do right, and in the assured hope of a better life, wherein they shall rise to the full glory and felicity of which we are capable. By those who experience in this world the peace and happiness derived from established habits and feelings of religion, it is constantly and most credibly declared that all the greatest enjoyments of this world, that feasting and amusement, or even loving and being beloved, are not equal in actual pleasure to the shedding of one truly penitential tear in the sight of God; and shall we not on that subject believe those who are worthy of belief on every other?

Whatever path they took, by hill or vale,
By night or day, the universal wish,
The aim and sole intent, was happiness;
But, erring from the heaven-appointed path,

Strange tracks indeed they took through barren wastes,
And up the sandy mountain climbing toil'd,
Which pining lay beneath the curse of God,
And nought produced. Yet did the traveller look
And point his eye before him greedily,
As if he saw some desolate spot, where grew
The heavenly flower where sprung the well of life,
Where undisturb'd felicity repos'd,
Though wisdom's eye no vestige could discern,
That happiness had ever pass'd that way. FOLLOX.

CHAP. XXL

A BELIEF IN THE FALL OF MAN ACCOUNTS FOR ALL
HIS INCONSISTENCIES.

The storms of wintry time will quickly pass,
And one unbounded spring encircle all. THOMSON.

It would be degrading the importance of our nature, not to assert that man is a fallen creature, seeing that the utmost dignity of the human race consists in having been originally created superior to what we are, and in being destined hereafter for a restoration to better things again. Like an imprisoned eagle, the soul of man is kept from soaring to the high destiny that awaits him; but as we originated from the will of our Father in heaven, to him we are invited to return, first in spirit, and then in person.

The greatness contrasted with the littleness obvious in the mind of man might prove, without more evidence, that he is indeed fallen from the pristine nobility of his nature, and he can no more restore himself than he could add a cubit to his stature; but our only hope of being delivered from our sins is that the sinless Saviour died for them, and the only sure evidence that we are

indeed enlisted among the selected servants of God, is when we are enabled to lead a holy life.

When the French ambassador visited Lord Bacon in his last sickness, finding the illustrious statesman in bed with the curtains all drawn round, he said in a tone of the most fulsome adulation, "You are like the angels of whom we hear and read much, but have not the pleasure of seeing them." "If," replied Bacon, "the complaisance of another compares me to an angel, my infirmities tell me I am a man."

Considering human nature as fallen and degraded, it is a more melancholy object than Nineveh or Babylon in ruins. We can plainly trace corruption and deficiency in others, yet when we turn to the contemplation of our own character and conduct, we do so with the doting partiality of a foolishly indulgent parent towards his only son. Each man has a tendency to idolise his own talents or influence, his taste or reputation; but perhaps the most hopeless case is that of him who indulges in spiritual pride, the very canker-worm of all true religion in our souls.

Those who would build high for the future must lay their foundation in the lowest humility,—not the humility which is to be worn merely like a cloak externally, and for going into society, but as an every-day garment, much more for real

use than for show. Lord Bacon said, in the prayer he composed for his old age, "the higher I rise in the estimation of men, the lower is my humiliation before Thee;" and, truly, unless our foundation be laid indeed on Christ's merits, we can have no other, for most undoubtedly men are happy as well as safe in proportion as they are humble. When true humility reigns in our souls, we are not wounded by the indifference of others, because conscious of being still treated as well as we deserve; neither do present afflictions overwhelm us, because we feel that there is still much more cause for gratitude than for complaint. Those who would die well must live in humility always, in solitude often, and in repentance habitually, pitying the sorrows of all around, and sharing the calamities of those they love, judging leniently of others and strictly of themselves, in order wisely to anticipate the judgment of God. As we are told that when the face of Moses shone with glory, every one became aware of it except himself; thus should it be in respect to the brightness of character in a Christian. Any pride nourished by man in this life will become, in another world, the source of his deepest humiliation; for truly, as the old proverb declares, "a quarrelsome man has no neighbour, a suspicious man has no friend, a discontented man has not himself, he who has no seats to sit on but those

of the scornful has no safety, but a man of humble piety has all."

It is strange, as Sydney Smith remarked, "to see a creature of a span's duration perched upon a little speck of the universe and strutting about in all the grandeur of littleness." There is a pride which apes humility, the most arrogant of all, treating acknowledged inferiors or dependents with supernatural condescension, but those who might claim to be nearly on the same level, with the most exclusive contempt. It is related of Bonaparte, that he always displayed the utmost haughtiness of manner towards the officers in his service, but that he treated the common soldiers with extreme familiarity as well as kindness. In the one case he considered that those nearest to his own station might possibly presume upon his condescension, but in the other case, the distance being so immeasurable, he had no cause to apprehend the remotest assumption of equality. It is on a similarly defensive principle, that the proudest personages will personally attend to the poor, superintend with astonishing affability soup kitchens, charity sales, harvest-homes, or servants' balls, where they incur no more danger of being mingled with the common herd, than a star of being mistaken for a lamp in the street; but those very persons, after perhaps attending daily prayers, to express before God the depths of their own

humility, will act with the most unjustifiable and unaccountable haughtiness towards those the nearest to their own rank in birth or education ; and such personages will sometimes leave a house filled with perfectly excellent and respectable people, declaring that there was "not a soul fit for them to associate with!"

Another instance of exclusiveness in religion is also deeply to be deplored and censured, when those who take such a due care of their own souls as to attend church systematically themselves, pay no conscientious attention that their servants and dependents shall go and do likewise. There are persons who attend prayers at home or at church every day of the week, and yet have no hesitation or scruple in taking the Sabbath of rest from their hard-working servants ; and, in order to give their own individual attendance more comfortably, keep away several other human souls, whose tribute of prayer and praise is also due to the God who made them. Can one individual expect his worship to be acceptable in the House of God if his being there keeps away two or three as willing and as much entitled to attend, whom he wantonly hinders ?

A similar spirit of exclusiveness exists among many who consider themselves eminent in Christianity, differing very little in its nature from those who consider themselves eminent in fashion : it is

the same disposition in a sanctimonious dress, and if the judgment of man were to decide who shall be promoted to a better world, each individual Christian would have a little paradise of his own, from which all should be strictly excluded, but the very few agreeing implicitly with himself. All men may be thankful, like David, that they fall into the hands of God rather than of men, and that before both God and man, they shall hereafter be judged, not on their own merits, of which their estimate cannot be too low, but on the merits of Christ; who casts a halo of glory on the frail, perishing, and guilty beings whom he pitied and redeemed, and who, whatever they may be called on to suffer here, should never for a moment forget what he endured for them.

Most men seem tacitly to imagine that they are entitled continually to enjoy every advantage to which they were born, looking upon it as an infringement of their just rights if health, fortune, friends, luxury, or any convenience to which they are accustomed, be diminished. It is singular that those who suffer most and longest are generally the readiest to acknowledge God's goodness, and the least apt to murmur at his dispensations. To them the smallest respite is an unusual delight, the most trifling success an unexpected surprise; but the uniformly prosperous, instead of looking gratefully back, during a trying hour, on the mercies of

their former life, make the very abundance and the long enjoyment of those blessings a ground on which to rest their discontent. A dissatisfied spirit considers every little cloud as having eclipsed the whole light of his existence, and endures the pleasures of life less patiently than some others endure its pains. As we see many people more grateful for a trifling gift than others for the very largest, so, when the possessions of a prosperous man are only perhaps reduced to the ordinary level of another, he looks not at the emptiness of his neighbour's prospects, who never perhaps knew for a day the happiness which he has enjoyed for years, but complains as if he were the only man alive who had ever been disappointed. Wealth, lands, children, home, and domestic affection, in the long possession of which he feels it an injury to be at length disturbed, are blessings that his less happy neighbour perhaps never knew, yet he murmurs that his own cup does not always overflow as formerly, though it be still much fuller than that of others equally deserving their Maker's bounty, and equally created by his hand. A man of ten thousand a year, if reduced to five hundred, is nevertheless better off than he who never had a guinea; yet the one laments inconsolably over the rupture of ties and the loss of enjoyments which the other never even transiently possessed. We need scarcely ask, whether it is best never to have

known blessings, or that, after having long experienced their delight, the desolation of them here should become the means of alienating us from a transitory world, where it is so difficult not to feel permanently at home, and so destructive of our best interests to do so.

A short period of happiness is surely better than none; therefore those who lose in the end, what others never enjoyed from the beginning, should consider the pleasure they received while it lasted as a cause of grateful recollection. The French who have the liveliest spirits and the saddest ideas, declare, "*qu'il faut rire avant d'être heureux, de peur de mourir sans avoir ri*;" and certainly he who is ready to murmur might consider the case of hundreds, or rather of thousands, as good, or better than himself, whose whole harvest in this world is but like the gleanings of a field compared with what yet remains to him. Dr. Johnson used to say that a habit of looking on the best side of every event is better than a thousand a year; but some men persevere with melancholy pertinacity in exasperating their grief and in continuing deaf to the language of consolation, while they exhibit a lamentable ingenuity in turning away from themselves in eluding every ordinary source of comfort, and in talking continually as if they could not long survive. Such persons are apt to declare that they have scarcely a week to live, and

exact as much attention from their worn-out family, as if they were to die to-morrow at farthest, which is in fact taking an unfair advantage of the sympathy felt for them. He who bids good night to a party of friends and lights his candle to retire, becomes afterwards, whatever be his merits, a tedious intruder if he linger long, frequently taking leave, and still finding something to say or to hear about, the regret caused by his departure.

Depression proceeds as much from bodily as from mental disease; but a truly humble Christian will ever be ready to resign what he unhesitatingly acknowledges that he never deserved, yet none can entirely conquer those powers of memory which conjure up to an afflicted man's thoughts the recollection of past enjoyments, now agonisingly contrasted with recent sorrows. How mournfully does his memory recapitulate the long catalogue as if he had been hired to plead a cause against himself! He seems desirous, in the luxury of grief, to be walled in with sorrow, to spill the cordials which might give him support, and would apparently prefer laying his head on a stone rather than a pillow; but, as an old writer quaintly remarks, "We must not rashly apply the candle of sorrow too near the thread of life." Unprofitable despondency is totally incompatible with that Christian lowly submission and cheerful gratitude which the Holy Scriptures distinctly enjoin; and

when a man considers his own case to be one quite unprecedented and peculiar, some pride no doubt lurks in the thought. Men would rather be talked of for any thing than not talked of at all; and if they cannot be quoted as the most fortunate of human beings, they will take a strange satisfaction in being conspicuous for the greatness of their afflictions. As Pascal remarks, there is no grief more acute than the recollection of former happiness. Who, but a discrowned monarch laments that he does not possess a throne? Who thinks himself unhappy because he has but one mouth? and who is not unhappy if he has but one eye? No one ever thought of sorrowing because he has not three eyes, yet he is inconsolable if he has but one.

We must not only beware, then, of one rash word, of one undisciplined thought, but likewise of presumptuously outrunning God's dispensations by anticipating more evil than he sends, taking up sorrow at interest beforehand while thus weighing our minds down with burdens which do not belong to the present hour. It is remarked of the Arabians that they have no music but what is melancholy, and men of pleasure are apt to imagine that the key-note of the Christian mind is also thus attuned to sadness, though in truth it is far otherwise. Many are the peculiar sources of hope and of cheerfulness to a mind calmed and en-

lightened by Christianity, while even in extreme grief such a spirit will seek out the best alleviations by considering how much greater the sorrow might have been, that so long as it is not sinful, it is not the very worst of evils, and that affliction, even in its severest form, is to a Christian only like the pillar of cloud by which God conducted the children of Israel towards the land of promise.

A good man whose mind had been well disciplined, said once to the friend who condoled with him on being borne down by many complicated sorrows, "I look around, and see how many there are much more heavily afflicted than myself. I look within, and see how much corruption there is in my heart. I look downward, and consider that hell which I have deserved. I look upward, and see that God whose hand overrules all events. I look backward, and see how many sharp afflictions he has made to work together for my good. I look forward, and see that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory to which he is conducting me, and for which, by these afflictions, he is preparing me; and when I have looked in all these directions, I do not think much of my present afflictions."

It becomes very important to notice what is the habitual tendency of grief in our minds. Does it turn our hearts in meek submission to God, or alienate our affection from his service

and from himself. Do we concentrate our thoughts only on the blessings we have lost, or excite our minds to consider the good design which God has in view by disappointing us? Do we murmur at God's inflictions, or pray to be benefited by them?

There can be no doubt that those who give way to intemperate and unrestrained anguish, soon find a painful delight in recalling every circumstance, unspeakably dear to the memory, by which we can revive the cherished image of our exiled friends, and willingly persuade ourselves that now we are like weeds stranded on a barren shore, beyond the reach of any coming tide. While goading our hearts to fruitless anguish, by contrasting the vanished joys of association and friendship with the solitary bereavement which has followed, we can fully persuade ourselves that unbounded sorrow, though certainly wrong in ordinary emergencies, may nevertheless be indulged in its most aggravated form in a case so accumulated and peculiar as we believe our own to be. The most afflicted Christian can little conceive how much greater may be the sting of his neighbour's trials, and the stroke he deplores is probably gentle compared with what many immediately around him may be suffering. What man has done man may do, and the Christian in extremity should often look

about him with the same spirit as Robert Hall, who calmed himself amidst a paroxysm of the severest agony in his last illness, by saying, "What a mercy it is to have so many alleviations! I might have been deprived of all these comforts; I might have been in poverty; I might have been the most abject wretch on the face of the earth!"

Even the best of men, who readily acknowledge that in a whole ocean of sorrow there is not one drop of injustice, have nevertheless a strange consolation in ascertaining that others are as deeply afflicted, or more so; and it is scarcely possible for any surer balm to be administered to any sorrowing spirit than by pointing out another similarly tried, equally blighted by disappointment, fretted with envy, or tortured with pain. In short, the conviction that it is worse with our neighbours, or that it might be worse with ourselves, is a source of almost mysterious consolation, like a gleam of light on a stormy day, shedding cheerfulness we scarcely know whence or how. A holy man, once in grief for the loss of his children, found his first comfort in making this remark:—"It is, at least, better to weep for ten dead children than for one living child." "Seven days," says the son of Sirach, "do men mourn for him that is dead, but for a fool and an ungodly man, all the days of his life."

We should try always thankfully to estimate the blessings remaining at as inestimable a rate as we should do if we lost them also, because, let what may be taken from us, much yet belongs to the most bereaved, and it is an undeserved favour that anything yet remains. Think if your health were broken up, or your sight failed, or more of your friends departed than those already gone, or if your fortune disappeared, or if your reputation were injured, how deeply you would estimate these after they were lost; therefore, if but one remain, we should be grateful, considering that we have no right to any. Let us, then, in this respect imitate the cheerful birds which continually sing their song of praise, unmindful of the wind and rain.

As most people can talk well to their friends of resignation in distress, let us, whatever we would say to others in such circumstances, say it to ourselves. If we should think another unjustifiable in rejecting consolation, then let us not earn the censure of our neighbours by being ourselves deaf to the support which we should have thought sufficient for them. Every reflection of comfort which we would have applied in the same circumstances to others should be written on our own souls, and should evidently influence our own conduct. Why should we think of feeding others with that of which we do not ourselves

wish to partake? and let us seriously recollect, that even those who have bread on their own table must, nevertheless, starve unless they take the trouble to eat it.

A poor Irish family, during the recent famine, when dying of starvation, received an unexpected donation of bread, but they all instantly agreed, with a magnanimity worthy of Sir Philip Sidney, on sending it on to a family not yet so near death as themselves, saying, "For us it comes too late, and we must inevitably perish, but our neighbours might yet be saved." In distributing the bread of life should not Christians exhibit a similar zeal and self-denial by administering benefits to others even till their latest hour, and at every personal sacrifice? for, truly, in active employment, and especially in active benevolence, is the best earthly resource against excessive grief. I have, however, seen those who could converse beautifully with a sorrowing parent, on the necessity of Christian resignation, in the loss of his only child, and would nevertheless be violently irritated on returning home at finding one of his own window-panes broken. We should, as Hannah More says, "Go to religion for the loss of our temper, as well as for the loss of our child."

In a mind of much depth, grief sinks with its own weight so unfathomly deep, that, after the first rush of emotion, all on the surface appears

world knew the history of his neighbor's feelings and circumstances: the petty feelings, the unsatisfied desires, the deep mortifications and severe sorrows which accompany a greatest and most prosperous men along of life, and agitated them to their dying hour. He recalled of Pierre Tourné, so long successful of worldly men, who raised from nothing by his talents, and was, "cured with every ground prayer," the last extreme of his old age he tried to himself like a child, with looking over his and his many magnificent orders — but one day, the conviction having broken upon him, that they were all perfringent baubles, he threw them contempt aside and burst into tears of mortification.

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admiring spectators, none could have guessed that her Majesty's mind was then made utterly wretched by a violent altercation in the state carriage, with her spoiled and imperious favourite, Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, who quarrelled with the queen because the royal jewels were not arranged as her Grace had proposed. Thus might a thousand instances be quoted to prove, that the gaudy prosperities and worthless tinsel of this fantastic world, are frequently lavished on those who find them, in truth, but thorny gifts at best, and none became more painfully sensible of this than Pope Sixtus the Fifth who, after rising from the lowest origin, became so apprehensive of being poisoned that he scarcely ever ate a morsel in peace. Driving once through the streets of Rome in state, he saw a porter at a convent-gate preparing to eat a mess of pottage. Instantly stopping the cavalcade, His Holiness sent eagerly for it, and fervently returned thanks to God who thus "permitted the chief of his servants on earth, to enjoy one meal without fear."

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have lived but too frequently on the mere phantoms of good and of evil. We either enjoy continued ecstasies of hope, or endure incessant agonies of fear; which turn out, after all, to be but shadows, because the substantial good of existence is in heaven, and the reality of wretchedness in hell.

The imagination, which has wings for every folly, becomes tame and jaded when we turn from the fairy regions of fancy, and endeavour to fix our minds in the sober paths of truth, where the matter-of-fact realities are but little in unison with the rainbow tints of hope. To imagine happiness, but to feel affliction, is the lot of very many; and if the young, even in their best years, when basking as it were under the very sunshine of heaven, cannot find enjoyment enough without entertaining the imagination with chimeras of ideal felicity, living for the time in a fool's paradise of impossible pleasures, hereafter to be enjoyed upon earth, what shall be their resource in advancing years? Then hope soars on a broken wing, while they become encompassed with the infirmities of age; their friendships are only with the dead, and they have no futurity on earth to anticipate, but that final hour when they shall enter the life and depart.

But if, in the midst of this mortal life, they could survive, could it still exist in a solid world, and at

it contains, has crumbled into nothingness ; but the feeble frame of man, within which his undying spirit is enclosed, soon tends to the dust whence it sprung. If, then, the soul be prepared to migrate into a better state, the aged Christian, bending beneath the weight of life, can look with calm and cheerful anticipation to the appointed period, when, freed from the encumbrance of mortality, his body, like the mantle of Elijah, shall be forsaken by his ascending spirit. A distinguished clergyman, well prepared for his transit into eternity, said, when dying, to one of his mournful attendants, " I am like a person who has been visiting his friends, and is about to return home. My trunk is packed, and everything prepared, while I am looking out of the window waiting for the stage to convey me hence."

Every tie to earth must be severed one by one, like the strings of a balloon before we can ascend ; but as each moment that a mortal breathes, brings him so much nearer to that time when the last stroke shall divide him from earth, how happy is it for those, no longer half-hearted Christians, who have acquired an habitual confidence in the wisdom of him who arranges all for our safe departure, and directs every separate event, until that period to all earthly concerns when,

Unheeded o'er our silent dust
The storms of life shall beat.

Dr. Johnson exclaimed, after Garrick had exhibited to him a splendid mansion decorated with all the luxuries of life, "These are what render a man unwilling to die!" In this remark the great moralist was surely mistaken! The internal condition of a man's mind is all in all, and mere outward prosperity makes little apparent difference; for, whether a pallet of straw, or a state bed, they may serve alike to die upon, seeing that, in both, the sufferings of mind as well as of body are alike. It is singular though certain, that a reluctance to depart from this world is often most obvious in those who leave least behind them to regret; and that the young, surrounded by every tie of life, are frequently more willing to go than the aged pilgrim encompassed with infirmities, who, nevertheless, cannot bear to think that the old tenement is about to be taken down.

A peculiar instance of this truth I had a melancholy opportunity some time since to witness, showing, evidently, that bodily comfort is nothing, and mental comfort everything, in the last extremity of nature. Being in attendance on the calm, holy, and peaceful decline of a relative, young, beautiful, and surrounded by every endearing tie that could enhance the value of life; I went one day from that scene, which no one who witnessed it could ever forget, to visit the death-bed of a blind old woman who had worn

out her long life in the last extreme of penury and disease ; while her cottage appeared so bereft of common comforts, or even of necessities, that, with the turf roof and stone floor, it seemed no better than a living tomb. Here the suffering patient had neither friends nor the ordinary decencies of a home, yet on all occasions she received with horror and apprehension, the slightest allusion to her danger ; while, on the contrary, in that mansion which I had so recently left, the dying saint seemed intent only on imparting to others, the well founded peace which she unceasingly enjoyed herself.

And now remembering that the parting sigh
Appoints the just to slumber, not to die ;
The starting tear I check'd, I kiss'd the rod,
And not to earth resign'd her — but to God.

YOUNG.

It is not, then, the condition, but the mind which regulates the degree of our attachment to life ; yet, if the old world at its worst and gloomiest be only too attractive, how much more firmly would our affections be glued to its interests if all on earth were bright with perpetual sunshine. Even then, however, a worldly man's regret becomes only the more intense, that so many joys must eventually terminate, and, that there is a farewell mingled with our youngest and gayest feelings

The afflictions of life are not arrows intended to injure us ; though certainly, if received with impatience, they pierce to our very hearts, becoming as sharp and injurious to the soul as a poniard to the body. Receive them as from God, and their bitterness is past.

There are plummets to sound the depths of the sea, but none for the secret councils of God ; yet if we, with our shallow understandings, could fathom the depth of our Creator's love to man, how clearly would it become evident, that he pities when he tries us ; and watches over the sufferings of his own people with an infinitely more profound compassion, than the most affectionate parent does over the son whom he loves, and whom that very love induces him to chasten. No one, then, should give way to that extreme of sorrow, as if his hopes in both worlds had been buried in one grave ; but, considering that however we rise in the prospects of happiness in one world, we so often sink proportionably in the other, let us be thankful that God's own infinite wisdom decides not merely why we should suffer, but why our sufferings should be of the particular kind they are, rather than any other. Our chief apprehension should be, not that we shall bear the cross of suffering, but that we may be so unfortunate as not to recognise its use ; for, the greatest of misfortunes is, to lose an affliction by

enduring the sting without receiving the benefit. We know it to be a sight at which the angels rejoice, when God enables a Christian, even though the iron has entered his inmost soul, to suffer in patient hope, conscious that if he lose all in this world, he is about to gain all in another. The consolations of religion are like the white-stone mentioned in Revelation, that "no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it:" yet as God enjoins his people to love one another, we are neither desired nor expected to stifle the common sensibilities of our nature. There could be no virtue in bearing what we do not feel; and those are degraded to the level of mere animals, who become insensible to earthly sympathies.

While we are human beings we must feel, and we ought to feel; but since we are Christians it is necessary to acquiesce in all events, not merely with submission but with animated hope, as it is insufficient for us merely to stupify our emotions, since it is rather necessary to regulate them—they are not to be destroyed, but to be disciplined within the bounds of human duty. No sight is more revolting, than to see those who bear the misfortune of their friends with indifference; and while we blame those who go to the extreme of sorrow, we cannot but utterly abhor the man who cares for none of those tender affections, which add the greatest dignity and happiness to our

mortal existence. In the present day, men live amidst a whirl of business and of pleasure, which scarcely leaves time for the best emotions of the heart; as travellers, rushing along the railway of life, can scarcely spare a moment to glance at the green spots, the fair valleys, the gardens, and the lights or shadows, among which the pilgrim of former days delighted to linger. Even the tie between parents and children is slight now, and might be compared to that of the animals and their offspring, which wander away from each other with forgetful indifference, as soon as the young no longer depend on the care of those that brought them into life, and to whom they owe ceaseless gratitude for affection, conferred long before the tender reason could acknowledge, or the infant memory record its sacred obligations.

In the circles of fashion, a report becomes prevalent, perhaps, that the father of a family is dangerously ill, but his sons are still to be met as usual in the park, or at the club. In a few days he has had a paralytic stroke, but his own family declare it to be very slight, and that no danger is apprehended; therefore, they all continue to attend the races and balls without interruption. Several doctors' carriages are seen at the door; but still the invalid is "no worse," and his medical advisers think so favourably of the case, that his sons go

as usual to Almacks, and never miss an opera. At last, the father of the family is undeniably dead; and, for a few days, etiquette still commands, that his sons shall vanish from general society, though, nevertheless, in a confidential way, most of their friends are admitted to see them at home. The funeral is over, and next day the bereaved sons are to be met, with very grave faces, and very broad crape on their hats, hurrying to the club, and shaking hands in solemn silence with any friend who accosts them. During the next week, they ride at uncouth hours in the park, decline balls, and only dine out with particular friends; but, in another fortnight, the whole event is consigned, with its duties and its sorrows, apparently to oblivion; and neither the dress, the manner, nor the social habits, indicate any remembrance of the parent, who watched over their early years, whose heart would have bled for their slightest sorrow, and to whose affection they owe a thousand watchful cares, a thousand tender solitudes, and all that prosperity and happiness, amidst which they have been so ready to forget him.

In China, any man is expected, on the decease of a parent, to retire for two whole years from all public employments, and from all general society; but in Great Britain, men of fashion are already beginning to forget the morality of instinct which

once made it a necessity of nature, as well as a duty of propriety, to sorrow in retirement for their deceased relatives. Many now seem ready to fulfil the prophecy of an old Duke of Argyle who said, he thought soon that "no one would stay at home but the corpse." Those who wish to evade all criticism or censure, hurry, after any domestic calamity, to the Continent; where, as a young lady once remarked, "It is such a comfort to escape from friends or relations," and where no cognisance can be taken of the conduct, either in respect to propriety of personal decorum, or to right feelings as regards others. In the present day there is so much variety for both mind and body, in change of place and change of books, that home feelings and home affections are apt to be forgotten. The head is cultivated, but the heart becomes dormant; as that mutual dependence on each other for enjoyment, that used to lay the foundation of family happiness and family affection, is now extinguished by the prevalence of public places, books, travelling, clubs, literary societies, and even, religious meetings.

A cold heart can lose nothing, because it is incapable of attachment or of sorrow. How different from the sensitive disposition of our divine Saviour, of whom it is recorded, that when little more than thirty years old, he was supposed to be nearly fifty; the effect no doubt of his

deeply-felt afflictions "as a man of sorrows." Christ gave us no example of stoical apathy, and his tears, shed at the grave of Lazarus, endear him the more to us, by showing that he felt and suffered like ourselves. Tears, such as our Saviour's, are given us by nature to be shed in affliction, for they relieve and refresh that fever of the soul, which would otherwise dry up the very spring of our existence—there is a grief too deep for tears, and well, indeed, is it for those who never knew a sorrow except such as they could weep over.

If trials like these be called, in Holy Scripture, "light afflictions," what must be the sufferings from which Christ our Saviour died to redeem us! Let our sorrow, then, be on all occasions the sorrow of Christians; and then, while we brood on what is gone, we shall, nevertheless, thankfully reflect on what remains. As an old writer oddly enough remarks, "Nothing entangles the skein of our lives like impatience;" and it is always best to cultivate a cheerful view of God's dispensations, as they respect both ourselves and others. There is a bright side to every thing in this world but sin, and there are alleviating circumstances attending the most afflictive dispensations. It is, consequently, a great attainment in Christian wisdom to discover those lucid spots in the cloudy atmosphere, which in our present imperfect state

envelopes us ; to give God the praise for them, and to take to ourselves, as well as to impart to others, the inestimable comfort.

It is unwise to look over-anxiously forward, weighing our spirit down with burdens which do not belong to the present period ; especially considering that the Christian is not promised strength against next year, but the assurance of Scripture declares that, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Even though the Christian sufferer may believe that the long shadows of evening have fallen on his path, never to be removed, that all gladness for him has departed from the earth, and, that henceforth he must look upon every prospect in this world, only through the dimmed glass of affliction ; yet, the tears of nature must not so blind his eyes that he cannot see the thousand mercies which remain. "The web may be dyed of a darker hue, but is wrought by the same subtile hand."

Whatever happiness any living mortal has lost, he enjoyed it exactly as long as God intended at the moment of his birth that he should do. Whether health, friends, fortune, either or all, if departed, were, from the first, only lent for a period originally fixed in the decrees of God, and now come to an end. When these gifts, hitherto nearest and dearest, are thrown to a distance or entirely removed, then the majestic realities of an

eternal world, too long neglected or overlooked by the mental eye, become clearer and more obvious, while our own moral deformities appear to us in their true colours.

When a Grecian philosopher was remonstrated with for lamenting in bitterness the death of his son, since he must know that all his grief was vain, he despondingly replied, "I weep on that account;" but religious affliction is not in vain if it bring forth repentance, and arise chiefly, as it ought to do, on account of what may be afterwards avoided—the commission of sin. Events are not in our power, but actions are. The Christian cannot, by the mere exertion of his will, make himself a man of talents, of influence, or of noble birth; nor can he force others to think well of him, but he may deserve that they should, by being constant to right principle, earnest for the good of others, and diligent in every work of holiness. A devout man does not fret at those circumstances which cannot be altered, but he only concerns himself that his motives in every action be of the purest origin, and that he shall unflinchingly discharge his own duty, be the consequences what they may.

If the Christian suffer, he can do so contentedly; if he be misconstrued, he endeavours to avoid giving or taking offence; and if his relatives act amiss, he not only prays for them, but also sets

them an example of the kindest forbearance. For the very sharpest arrow in the quiver of human suffering, there is an antidote in the hopeful belief awarded to a Christian spirit, that, having "Sown in tears, he shall reap in joy." The death of an only son, brought the woman of Sarepta to a salutary recollection of her sins, when she exclaimed with heart-piercing anguish to the prophet Elijah, "O man of God! art thou come to call my sins to my remembrance?" and do we not perceive, what reason for thankfulness David found out amidst the endurance of much sorrow, when he made that important confession, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word." How many might use the same language, and have experienced the same salutary consequences of grief, chastened by reflection, for sorrow is in truth like the voice of John crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord."

Those who have no happiness left of their own, may yet borrow much from others, by sympathising in the joy that falls to the share of any one they love, or in alleviating the equal, or even greater sorrows of their neighbours. Thus the Christian finds an object of friendly interest in every human being within his reach; and even in the many scattered throughout far distant lands, whom, though he may never behold, he neverthe-

less exerts himself to befriend. The most degraded and lost he must not exclude from his good offices, considering, that, as God commands his own people to help a mere beast of burden if it fall, much more would he commend to our good offices a fellow-creature sinking beneath a weight of sorrow. To such an one, with what benevolent pleasure does the Christian point out a source of comfort, which has always been to himself the cordial of life and death.

The soil of affliction is almost miraculously productive of good, when we have once for all heartily surrendered our own desires to the will of God. This brings more real comfort than would the full accomplishment of our utmost wishes; and it was the saying of a truly admirable Christian, that among the toils, anxieties, and mortifications of life, he never knew happiness until he came to the conviction, that there was for him no happiness in this world.

The darts of anguish fix not, where the seat
Of suffering is thoroughly fortified
By acquiescence in the Will supreme,
For time and for eternity. WORDSWORTH.

How heartless and drowsy are our prayers in prosperity, compared with their earnestness and fervour in adversity! A blessing, at the same time, cannot be expected as a matter of course to

arise from grief, which merely softens the ground on which the plough is at work ; but when the good seed is sown, if the Sun of Righteousness shine forth, and the dew of God's grace descend, it will grow up, under the divine blessing, to perfection. What comes to others therefore in wrath, is sent to the Christian in mercy ; and it is the family peculiarity of God's own people that, while enjoying a peace, so deep and secure that no earthly storm can disturb it, they can even rejoice in tribulation, conscious that whatever a Christian suffers is a necessary part of his education for eternity. The roughness of the way seems of but momentary consequence to a traveller, provided he be cordially welcomed in a friend's house at last ; and there is unspeakable peace of mind to those who look for nothing from day to day, except their daily task and their daily portion in bearing that Cross which is to fit them for a Crown of glory.

Had Naomi understood that the purpose of God in removing her husband, and in starving her out of Moab, was, in fact, that her daughter should become an ancestress of our divine Saviour, would she have complained that the Lord had dealt very bitterly with her ; and would she, with peevish impatience, have changed her name to commemorate this severity ? Very different from Naomi's was the more enlightened language of St. Paul, when,

in the midst of all his sufferings, he so eloquently alludes to himself and his brethren, as "Dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and not killed; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

These expressions of St. Paul, addressed to the Corinthians, were among the last verses read to the pious Fenelon on his death-bed, who twice roused himself, his pale cheek becoming flushed with hope, and his dim eye once more brightened with intelligence, when he earnestly exclaimed, "Répétez-moi cet endroit là." How similar were the feelings, and how interesting the final words of that accomplished scholar and excellent Christian, Dr. Hope, of whom it is recorded that in the dark valley of death itself, he exclaimed, "Christ is all in all to me. I have no hope except in him. He is, indeed, all in all — there is no darkness!"

I do remember, and will ne'er forget
The dying eye! That eye alone was bright,
And brighter grew as nearer death approached;
As I have seen the gentle little flower
Look fairest in the silver beam which fell,
Reflected from the thunder-cloud that soon
Came down, and o'er the desert scattered far
And wide its loveliness.
He set, as sets the morning star, which goes
Not down behind the darkened west, nor hides
Obscured among the tempests of the sky,
But melts away into the light of heaven.

CHAP. XXIII.

PRESENT SUFFERING PURIFIES AND ELEVATES THE
CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

How bright these glorious spirits shine !
Whence all their white array ?
How came they to the blissful seats
Of everlasting day ?

Lo ! these are they, from suff'rings great,
Who came to realms of light,
And in the blood of Christ have wash'd
Their robes which shine so bright.

THESE lines have long been the solace of many a suffering Christian, and well do they merit to be so ; yet we must remember, that they afford no sanction for expecting holiness for certain, to spring up as a necessary fruit of affliction, seeing that sorrow is not like medicine, which may be taken and then forgotten, being able to cure by its own inherent power. It was not because those redeemed souls had suffered, that they were promoted to so high a rank in heaven, but because their garments were purified by the sacrifice of our divine Saviour. That, in truth, and not the affliction, caused the glorification of those blessed spirits, and our improvement by sorrow should be

worked out by our own thoughts, so that however painful it be to meet with grief, we shall not part with it until some benefit be gained.

As surely as the rod attracts lightning from the clouds, so certainly is it our sins which bring down affliction on our heads; and it gives an early intimation of the inseparable affinity between sin and death, that no sooner had our first parents fallen, than the first animals died, not only to furnish their clothing, but also as a sacrifice for their sin. Adam and Eve fell under the only temptation which could apparently reach human beings in so simple a state as theirs in Paradise. When no rivals existed, no ambition for pre-eminence could arise; where no luxuries could be purchased, no use existed for wealth; and those petty jealousies respecting power or celebrity which have since ruined so many of their descendants, had there no foundation on which to rest.

When our first parents lived to witness all the after-agonies which their guilt had so calamitously entailed upon their posterity—and sin is the only thing on earth that really belongs to man, being entirely his own—how deeply aggravated their penitence must have been, to think that by yielding to a momentary bait, they had brought desolation and ruin on the beautiful world by which they were surrounded, and involved every living mortal, who was to follow after them, in the same degra-

dation, sorrow, and remorse, as themselves. In that eloquent poem, "The World before the Flood," by J. Montgomery, the feelings which must have haunted Adam in all his subsequent life are thus affectinglly imagined :—

But Adam was so humble in the sight of all,
The vilest ne'er reproach'd him with his fall;
Yet as a parent, nought beneath the sky
Touch'd him so quickly as an infant's eye.
Joy from its smile of happiness he caught,
Its flash of rage sent horror through his thought;
His smitten conscience felt as fiercé a pain,
As if he fell from innocence again.

No one can doubt, that the sin of our first parents is visited on all their posterity; and in daily life we may trace the analogy to this, from the universal experience or observation of mankind. Every child in this world is liable to suffer for the delinquency of his earthly progenitors. An extravagant father reduces all his sons to beggary; and the shame of a profligate parent is reflected on all his descendants: therefore, while we feel and know that infirmity and death, without the possibility of escape, are our inherited portion on earth, how gratefully may we reflect, that the worst penalty of our perverted nature is removed by Christ's coming, as the brother of mankind, to rescue the race of man from final destruction. He who learns with

sorrow, that "In Adam all died," must in humble gratitude rejoice, also, to read that, "In Christ shall all be made alive."

Our divine Saviour in his human nature trod a far more thorny path than ours can at the very worst become. He "calls us not servants, but friends;" he feels for us as a father; he is "a brother born for adversity," and in all our afflictions, he is himself afflicted. As the refiner of silver, stands watching continually the burning metal while it remains in the furnace, and only ascertains that it is completely purified by seeing his own image at last reflected on the surface; thus Christ, as a refiner and purifier, watches over his own people in the fire of affliction, till he sees that his own image has become reflected in their hearts.

It is obvious, that not only is man originally defective, but that nothing belonging to this world comes from the hand of nature in its best state for use and ornament; marble must be skilfully chiselled before it assumes a form of beauty and grace; plants must be frequently pruned, trained, and sometimes even cut down to the very earth, before they shoot forth in full luxuriance; flowers are bruised to make them emit their sweetest fragrance; incense must be burned before it imparts a delicious odour; and gold has to be melted, that the monarch's image may be

stamped upon its surface. Above all, however, the soul of man requires to be sculptured into perfection by the Divine hand ; so that, as heaven is prepared for us, we may be duly prepared to take a place within its holy precincts. Every sin is treason against the soul ; and the Christian, from his birth to his death, must necessarily be under the daily, hourly, even momentary discipline of his Maker, to train him for the place of perfect spirits ; in the meanwhile, his mind must be turned and tossed from side to side continually, till it finds rest in the service of God here, as well as in the hope of glory hereafter.

As Bishop Taylor remarks, the mind of every man in a state of nature resembles a bell which has been broken, and must be recast before it can emit the proper tone ; or it might be compared to a shattered mirror which reflects a hundred images, instead of only one ; or it is like a marble image, showing the form of life, but destitute of the reality, till touched by a torch more powerful than that of Prometheus.

No one will deny that, in respect to the disposition of children, the tendency of their hearts is on every side to evil ; and that, were it not for the continual struggle of their instructors, from the dawn of infancy till manhood, to eradicate sinful propensities as well as to implant the seeds of excellence, they would all, without exception, grow

up slovenly, passionate, selfish, vain, and untruthful. Such are savages in a state of nature, and such would the most refined ornaments of civilised society have been, but for the counter-acting influence of good habits early instilled, and perseveringly enforced by friends and parents. It was in a truly Christian spirit of humility that, when the mother of the Chief Justice, Lord Mansfield, was complimented on having the three finest sons in Scotland, she calmly replied, "I have much to be thankful for, but nothing to be proud of."

Even the virtues, if they be not carefully pruned and trained, run into vices; and the whole tendency of nature is to degeneracy and evil habits. Those who are trusted with prosperity become worldly, those who gain riches grow covetous or luxurious, he who has friends makes idols of them, or, if he acquire fame, does he not grow intolerably vain and egotistical? At the same time, the chief misfortune of all these is, that the more we value such temporary gifts, the less we estimate those which are eternal or appreciate the goodness of God in freely offering us both.

If some kind friend presented us, on the same day, with a trifle worth only a shilling, and with a diamond worth a thousand pounds, how strange it would seem if our whole attention were directed to the first, and if the entire energy of our gratitude were expressed for that comparatively in-

significant object, while the other lay utterly neglected, without exciting a single emotion of thankfulness. How much greater, then, is the disparity of worth between the unsatisfying pleasures which we hold for a short lease—for a mere inch of time—here on earth; and those whose existence is so endless that, compared with them, the duration of the ancient pyramids is no more permanent than a pillar of snow.

It is well indeed for those who do not receive, only in this world, "the portion of goods that falleth to them;" and there is in the Roman Catholic service a prayer appointed to be repeated fifteen times over on Sunday, which appears a most natural petition for those to offer who believe in their melancholy and peculiar doctrine, "Oh Lord! give me here my purgatory!"

Amid my list of blessings infinite,
Stand this the foremost, "That my heart has bled."
'Tis heaven's last effort of good will to man;
When pain can't bless, heaven quits us in despair.
Who fails to grieve when just occasion calls,
Or grieves too much, deserves not to be bless'd.
May heaven ne'er trust my friend with happiness
Till it has taught him how to bear it well,
By previous pain; and made it safe to smile.

YOUNG.

In Luther's last will it is interesting to observe these words, proving how consistent with the

tenor of his whole life and conduct was his final estimate of worldly prosperity. "Oh Lord! I thank thee that thou would'st have me live a poor and indigent person on earth! I have neither house, nor lands, nor possessions, nor money to leave!"

An interesting notice, in a similar spirit, was read some time ago by an English clergyman in church, showing that diffidence and self-distrust, which are the surest pledges of safety in the progress of events. It was expressed in these words, "The prayers of this congregation are requested for a young man who, having succeeded unexpectedly to a large fortune, is afraid lest he fall into temptation and a snare." It was a fine trait of Christian circumspection, even amidst the first unexpected shock of prosperity; and who would not fervently join in the petition, that an inheritance so received might bring a blessing to himself and to many?

Some years ago, a most popular work appeared in public, the perusal of which gave universal pleasure, entitled "Russell's Tour in Germany;" and to those who had read the pages with much interest, it became afterwards a subject of surprise that an author receiving encouragement so well merited did not, in these pen and ink times, again come forward in another form before an admiring public so prepared to welcome his return. Very recently, however, a paragraph appeared in "The

Times" newspaper, announcing the author's premature death; to which intimation the following most touching notice was added: "Compelled by illness to abandon, in the prime of life, both the pursuits of literature and the practice of his profession, he found compensation in the Christian meditations and hopes which cheered a long period of bodily affliction."

Who would not desire such a life, if terminated by such an end! A few conflicts, trials, and sufferings, overcome, that enlightened and grateful Christian having passed along the stream of mortality, has entered with confidence and hope on his rest. Eternal rest is not, as many are apt to imagine, a rest like that of a stone at the bottom of a well, but a rest of conscious enjoyment, the very life of life; during which the redeemed Christian anticipates a state of continued moral and intellectual advancement, all his high-born feelings and faculties being continued in ceaseless existence, and being advanced in continual progress towards perfection. Scott, the commentator, in the last hour of his mortal life, still retained his consciousness so vividly, that aware how rapidly he was going onwards to eternity, he repeated without difficulty the 12th chapter of Isaiah, and these were his final words:—"This is heaven begun! I have done with darkness for ever—for ever—Satan is vanquished.

Nothing now remains but salvation with eternal glory."

Such good and useful men would not be taken out of this world unless a happier state awaited them; but even to the most favoured Christians death should be a subject of awe, and ought to be considered, clearly and distinctly, as a penalty of transgression — a penalty most deservedly incurred, and therefore to be patiently endured, not with the triumphant feeling as if we had ourselves conquered its terrors, but with the meek and grateful submission of those who know that they are saved by the merits of another.

When a late venerable, and most distinguished clergyman in Edinburgh was expiring, he made a last effort to have himself supported in bed; and though he had been for some years blind, he himself administered the sacrament to all his surrounding family, as a dying testimony that his only hope of salvation was derived from the intercession of Christ, and as an earnest of his confident expectation, that their next meeting would be in the presence of him who had died for them. Thus, we also must retain to our latest breath, the impressive consciousness that we die because we are sinners — pardoned sinners; but still, as our very virtues are so imperfect that they require a pardon, let no man hide from himself that he dies a sacrifice to his own actual guilt. Nevertheless,

every well instructed Christian turns with tears of honest repentance, but with perfect confidence, his last expiring hope to the cross of Christ, feeling as confident of its shedding mercy on his soul, as he would be of deriving heat from the fire, or light from the sun.

“I shall be judged this night!” were the expiring words of a very young girl, called suddenly — almost instantaneously into eternity; and prepared as she was, the impressiveness of such an exclamation nevertheless overawed all around; for the more any one reflects on the solemnity of so hurried a summons, the more ardently grateful must he feel, that in a scene, which unassisted nature could not sustain, God promises to the Christian ample courage and special support, — a rod and a staff, stronger than death itself, to take them safely though the dark valley, and shield them from its dangers.

A singular and interesting circumstance, connected with such an entire confidence in our Redeemer’s merits, occurred lately during the trial of a soldier at Piershill barracks, for murdering, in a paroxysm of passion, one of his comrades. When proceeding after his arrest to the court of justice, he had so perfect a confidence of being acquitted, that scarcely one anxious thought had crossed the hardened criminal’s mind; but a well meaning Christian spectator, not perhaps antici-

pating any peculiar effect from doing so, addressed him in these words, slowly and solemnly uttered, "You will never find peace, till you seek it from God, through Jesus Christ." That short sentence took a strong grasp of the unhappy prisoner's attention; and when, some hours afterwards, he most unexpectedly found himself convicted and condemned, it immediately recurred to his mind with almost unaccountable pertinacity. He afterwards told that most exemplary clergyman, Dr. Hunter, who visited him, that being resolved to evade all reflection or repentance, he attempted to banish those words from his memory, by occupying himself the whole subsequent night in contriving the most fearful oaths and blasphemous expressions that he could invent, working himself into a paroxysm which almost amounted to madness; but still, clearly and distinctly above all the storm he could raise, that single sentence shone in upon his mind like a star to guide him aright. He could not get rid of the words; therefore, at length he yielded to the strong impulse of his mind and sat down to reflect on their import. To that reflection succeeded prayers, tears, and remorse; after which he, who had never before learned to read, asked to be taught. He now studied so hard, that in a few weeks the anxious pupil could with difficulty spell over one or two chapters of the Bible. He listened with grateful

attention to the exhortations of his assiduous admonitor Dr. Hunter ; and when, some time afterwards, that soldier suffered on the scaffold for his crime, he gratefully declared that he had indeed found peace by seeking it from God, through Jesus Christ.

No one held that opinion of our entire dependence on a crucified Saviour with more enlightened faith or more exemplary virtue, than our own venerable monarch George III. ; who considered the mercy of Christ as a legacy to man, of which he was bound to be an executor whenever an occasion offered to administer its benefit. When that pious prince was about to lose his favourite daughter, the much lamented Princess Amelia, he one day said to her, with touching earnestness, " You have ever been a good child to your parents : we have nothing for which to reproach you ; but I need not tell you that it is not of yourself alone that you can be saved, and that your acceptance with God must depend on your faith and trust in the merits of the Redeemer." " I know it," replied the dying princess, with gentle resignation, " and I could not wish for a better trust."

Such is the ark in which we must seek a safe refuge during that period when all else to which we could have trusted, or in which any living being has trusted, shall be involved in one universal wreck ; and how are the grandest, noblest,

and boldest conceptions of our diminutive minds lost and overwhelmed in the conception of that eternity which shall follow! No plummet can fathom its depth, no measure can grasp its dimensions, and the small atom of understanding given to man cannot fully take in the idea.

As he who would be drowned in attempting to ford a river may, nevertheless, be refreshed by tasting it at the brink; thus the wonders of eternity, which cannot be fully comprehended by mortal man, are yet a most salutary subject of contemplation, for the mind expands while it loses itself in the infinity of thought. The imagination itself, that power which darts from earth to heaven, from the present to the future, which creates a world for itself, and which delights in its own most expansive flights—even the imagination falls back stunned and exhausted by the attempt to compass so vast a prospect as eternity. Arithmeticians can compute the utmost limits of time, and astronomers calculate the uttermost verge of the planetary system, but what numbers can express the length of eternity? When ages, countless as the leaves of autumn, or the rain-drops of winter, shall have elapsed, eternity is only beginning!

After the curtain of time has dropped we must expect to behold the dissolution of all earthly things, the burial of nature. the graves opening,

the sea giving up her dead, and assembling nations crowding from every side, the heavens departing like a scroll, and our divine Saviour himself, surrounded by ten thousand times ten thousand angels, before whom and the collected world, every thought and action of our past lives shall be openly disclosed. Does it not appear like a dream, to each individual who deliberately considers the subject, that in such a scene we are ourselves to be present; that from such a scene we cannot escape; and that then we may call in vain for the mountains to fall on us, or for the hills to cover us from the wrath of an offended God, unless shielded by the mercy and intercession of a trusted Saviour?—

When rising from the bed of death,
O'erwhelmed with guilt and fear,
I see my Maker face to face,
Oh! how shall I appear?

But never shall my soul despair
Of mercy at thy throne,
Who knows thine only Son has died
Thy justice to atone. ADDISON.

If our motives, as well as our actions, could ill stand the scrutiny of even our most partial friends, how shall they on that occasion be estimated? What would then signify the pains and

sufferings of a previous life, if the discipline of temporary sorrow turns out to have been our necessary preparation for that land where sorrow is unknown? St. Clement records of St. Peter, that after his fall, every morning of his life, when the cock crew, he humbled himself anew before God, in the deepest agony of repentance.

Archbishop Leighton used often to say, that he had a good hope for eternity, and a great desire to see what was doing on the other side, being heartily satiated with this world. If all who are tired of their present lives, and even weary of their own happiness, were as ready as Leighton for another existence, there would indeed be many awaiting a happy exchange,—"a gentle wafting to eternal life:" and how earnestly should all such seek for that elevated tone of mind which shall fit them to take their part in the heavenly choir! The whole creation seems designed as it were for a musical instrument of as many strings as there are beings in heaven and on earth. Let the Christian, therefore, make haste to get his own heart in tune, lest, when the heavens rejoice, and the earth is glad, his own note of joy and praise be wanting.

The day of wrath — that dreadful day,
When heaven and earth shall pass away,
What power shall be the sinner's stay?
Whom shall he trust that dreadful day?

When shrivelling, liked a parched scroll,
The blazing heav'ns together roll ;
When, louder yet, and yet more dread,
Swells the high trump that wakes the dead ?

Oh ! on that day, that wrathful day,
When man to judgment wakes from clay,
Be *thou* the trembling sinner's stay,
Though heaven and earth shall pass away.

SCOTT.

CHAP. XXIV.

THE FEAR OF DEATH ALLEVIATED OR REMOVED BY
FAITH IN CHRIST.

And perhaps in the portal the glorified band
Of kindred and friends long removed from thy sight,
Breathing welcome and bliss, around thee will stand,
Array'd in their garments of heavenly light.

Transporting re-union! bright meed of all those
Who on earth bow'd in meekness and faith to the rod,
Still thankful alike, if the thorn or the rose
Was strew'd on the pathway that led them to God.

She has knock'd! she has enter'd! bless'd Spirit, farewell!
We rejoice in thy bliss, though our loss we deplore;
It is joy that thou art where the blessed ones dwell;
But oh! it is grief we behold thee no more!

MRS. OPIE.

THE late Mrs. Hemans, in her last illness, declared that "no poetry could express, nor imagination conceive, the visions of blessedness that flitted across her fancy, and made her waking hours more delightful than those given to temporary repose. Her spirit appeared already half etherealised, her mind seemed fraught with deep,

holy, and incommunicable thoughts, and she would entreat to be left alone, in stillness and darkness, to commune with her own heart, and reflect on the mercies of her Saviour."

Ev'n while with us thy footsteps trod,
God's seal was on thy brow.
Dust to the narrow home beneath!
Soul to its place on high!
They that have seen thy look in death
No more may fear to die. HEMANS.

If our friends, now in heaven, could return to tell us of that bright home, where, in the presence of him, who is greater than the greatest, and better than the best, their benignant Saviour, nothing is experienced but perfect joy, perfect safety, and perfect love, should we not exclaim, with unutterable thankfulness on their account, as well as on our own, "I shall go to them, but they shall not return to me?"

The aged Christian, standing on the margin of eternity, and more weary of sin than of sickness, more grieved for his moral than for his physical infirmities, cheerfully anticipates the time when both together shall be laid aside; such are his consolations, that nothing is left him to pray for except their continuance to the end; and, with his heart supremely fixed on God, he bids farewell, in perfect peace, to the closing stage of life, in a

spirit similar to that of Beza, who quoted in his last hour these words of St. Augustine, "I have lived long, I have sinned long; blessed be the name of the Lord."

If the stars of night have one by one been obscured, the Christian observes their extinction as an evidence that a brighter morning is about to break; that the sun itself shall soon arise in dazzling glory before his enraptured vision: and thus assured, he can pass through the valley of the shadow of death, saying, like David, "I fear no evil;" and, feeling like St. Paul, his firmest faith in his nearest approach to God. When the late exemplary and devout Christian, Mr. Cathcart of Drum, was expiring, the very light of Heaven, like a meteor from above, seemed to gleam with transient brightness on his mind before it sank into darkness, and his final words were these: "I could weep for you, my friends, with all my heart. But I would not have you to weep for me. If this be death, one need not be afraid to die."

"Nor waits he dissolution to be bless'd."

Bodily suffering being alike severe to all, whether infidel or Christian, the first and most natural effect of sickness is, no doubt, to cloud and terrify the mind. The attention of the soul is, then, in a perfectly new and irresistible sense,

arrested and appalled by the thought of appearing soon under death's black banner in an unknown world; and a prayer is often wrung in such circumstances from those who never prayed before, even though it be no better than that awful supplication of the dying infidel, "Oh, God, if there be a God, admit me to heaven, if there be a heaven!"

Every living man feels a most natural interest in learning what were the emotions and sentiments of others in any peculiar circumstances, but especially when that hour has come to them which must come to all. Persons who judge superficially have been known to remark, that they are at a loss to imagine how a confirmed Christian can fear death. There is no greater mistake, however, than to measure any one's preparation for another life by the degree of alacrity with which he welcomes an exchange from this world to a better. Great as is the privilege of any one who feels consciously ready, many may be so to whom the full and joyful anticipation is not awarded.

The waves and billows of a storm may alarm the Christian, though they cannot destroy him, and the rough blasts of distress, which might wreck a frailer bark, merely hurry his own to the haven of rest. It is probably to comfort and encourage those who are overwhelmed by the

awfulness of their last hour, that the Bible relates how appallingly for a time the consciousness of God's benignant presence was withdrawn from our divine Saviour himself in his final agony, when he cried out, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?"

Independently of our natural instinct, which shrinks back from the grave, and the nature of disease being generally such as to depress the mind with gloomy thoughts of all that is past, present, or future, there can be no doubt that in such an hour a sense of guilt is often more prominently felt than a sense of pardon. The trumpet of conscience sounds at first with a louder tone than the still small voice of mercy and forgiveness.

Though the Christian is conscious that his Saviour came from heaven for the very purpose of leading him safely there, yet to dying men, an almost miraculous remembrance is sometimes given of all their past lives, and especially a most startling consciousness of their sins. If these be not already repented of, in what fearful array shall they then appear! Our sins of omission and of commission, our wilful sins, and those into which we are led by inadvertence or infirmity. The sins of our inclination, of our society, of our employments; the sins we had scarcely noticed and almost forgotten; the sins of our devotions, of

our recreations, of our meals and our amusements; our sins of extravagance or of parsimony; those of our childhood, our youth, and our riper years, in thought, word, and deed, against our God, our neighbour, and ourselves.

Who that did not rely on the intercession of a crucified Saviour could review such a catalogue and hope to be pardoned? The degree of faith which might, during health, overcome all fear, would require greatly to be strengthened before it could have a similar effect in such an hour; especially, considering that, as Satan generally misleads men in health to be presumptuous, he always attempts, in sickness, to drive them, if possible, into despondency. A learned and much revered Bishop, apparently at the point of death, lately, from sudden inflammation, and scarcely able to speak, in his extreme agony said to those around, "I cannot think one collected thought now; but when the mortification comes on, I shall be at ease and able to pray."

When we become fully convinced that there is no help in ourselves, then does the Christian look for help where alone it is promised, and shall certainly be found in the attributed merits of Christ, who becomes present to a pious mind in the last hour with a distinctness not granted in life, because not necessary. The dying address of Lady C—— to her afflicted sister, after she had

taken a calm, deliberate, and very solemn farewell of each individual separately in the house, and bid a last adieu to the friends of her youth, comprised, in the few earnest words she was able to utter, all that consolation and encouragement due in such circumstances from one Christian relative to another — “Follow after Christ while you live, and he will be with you in death, as he is with me.”

Her did I see when death was at her side,
And hope no longer to our prayers replied ;
Awe she confest — but awe, devoid of fear,
In death, as life, who knew her Maker near :
Yet she, whose claim — if any may — will prove
Sure of the joys that crown the just above.
Humbly preferr'd no title of her own ;
And in redeeming grace reposed alone ;
In acts of prayer life's ebbing moment past,
Or acts of love, benignant to the last.
Not one forgot, nor fail'd to recommend
Each poor dependent — name each valued friend ;
And, quite resign'd, the summons all but given,
Still human, grieved to leave us, though for heaven.

Our minds would be on the rack, if, in our last hours, all the guilt engrained into our consciences becoming visible to the memory, we were obliged anxiously to measure our own deservings by the rule of God's requirements ; but how different, and how delightful is the safe, simple, and satisfactory hope afforded us through a crucified Redeemer ! Even the most fiery zealot in con-

troversy will throw aside all his weapons in the last hour, and wonder to think for what he has been disputing when others have been enjoying; why he raised so much angry controversy, like a cloud of dust around him, concealing the great realities of faith and peace from his view. Those eminent divines who had a thirty years' war about the meaning of that text, "My kingdom is not of this world," might have been more pleasingly occupied in gaining a victory over themselves than over each other, and in finding out on what points they could agree, rather than in drawing general attention to the only point on which they differed.

To the simple doctrine of our salvation, through Christ alone, every Christian is eager to bear his last testimony in the closing scene of life; and none did so more clearly and more heartily than the Chevalier Bayard, distinguished by the good opinion of his cotemporaries, as being "*sans peur et sans reproche*;" but better known to himself, as an erring creature, sharing the common guilt and infirmity of the whole human race. When mortally wounded in battle, his last words were most interesting and most deeply affecting—"My God! I am assured that thou hast declared thyself ever ready to receive into mercy and to forgive whosoever shall return to thee with a sincere heart, however great a sinner he may have been.

Alas! my Creator and Redeemer, I have grievously offended Thee during my life, of which I repent with my whole soul. Full well I know that, had I spent a hundred years in a desert, on bread and water, even that would not have entitled me to enter thy kingdom of heaven, unless it had pleased Thee, of thy great and infinite goodness, to receive me into the same, for no creature is able in this world to merit so high a reward: my Father and Saviour! I entreat thee, be pleased to pass over the faults by me committed, and show me thy abundant clemency, instead of thy rigorous justice."

He who should expect, for bestowing a glass of water on a thirsty traveller, to be recompensed with an estate, would be modest in his demand, compared with those who expect to earn a place in heaven for themselves by the utmost merit of their own performance. A sick man informed a clergyman in Yorkshire, who attended him lately, that he felt confident of gaining admission into heaven, on account of his having led a life, during forty years, of perfect obedience! "Suppose that were possible, which it is not," replied his plain-speaking monitor, "it would then be an ample recompense if, during above forty years hereafter, you were to be awarded a course of perfect happiness; but who can imagine himself entitled, for every hour he lives well upon earth, to several

thousand years of felicity in heaven? No! even if our sins did not shut us out of Paradise, our merits never could be a sufficient means of earning us a title to be admitted within its holy precincts."

Christ, as our Saviour, first shows us the prospect of an everlasting inheritance, then gives us a claim to it, and, lastly, affords us strength to reach it. Faith might be compared to a window which opens to our sight the possessions promised to a believer; and the Holy Spirit, without whose influences our minds are as dark as the world was in chaos before the creation — that Holy Spirit gives an assured hope of heaven, which animates the Christian to rejoice at length, when in the end of life temptation and sorrow are about to become extinct, when he shall be delivered from all his pains, resolved of all his perplexities, relieved from all his sins, freed from all his fears; when he shall be happy beyond his hopes, and have that happiness secured beyond the power of time or change.

From such a state would it not be death, indeed, to return? Then shall the Christian enter on the enjoyment of knowledge without error, tranquillity without disturbance, and love without the possibility of diminution; yet, much as he anticipates, how unspeakably will his feeble conceptions be exceeded by the great reality! A child of six

years old might more easily be made to understand all which relates to this life, than the most enlightened Christian to estimate all the realities of eternity.

In Cicero's dialogues on old age, he supposes Cato, the censor, to say, that, if he were offered to be made young again, the privilege would be odious to him, and would be certainly declined; so wearisome had he, who seemed unusually fortunate, found his past life; and in the human mind there is a necessity for progress, which would render it irksome to stand still even on the most sunny spot of existence, and yet more unpleasant, after the rush of years is over, to retrograde. The Christian, above all, becomes not only alienated from this life, but he is also reaching earnestly forward to that better state, where he shall cease to grieve, and cease to sin; so that as he advances, the language of his heart becomes full of assured hope, and he can say with a cheerfulness independent of every vicissitude, "If I live, it is well; if I die, it is better." When Oberlin, at the age of eighty-six, was on the point of expiring, his mind seemed thus to embrace both worlds, and to be ready for either. Calm, rational, and intelligent to the last, when he could no longer articulate, and the eloquent language of his lips, in which he had expressed to all around the joy of his faith, had become for ever silent, he

took off his cap, joined his hands, and looked fervently towards heaven, his countenance beaming with an expression of hope, love, and peace never to be forgotten. He then closed his eyes, and immediately afterwards departed to that better world, for which he had so long and so diligently prepared himself, and to which he had directed the many whom he reclaimed from vice and ignorance.

There is probably no one who would willingly consent to live and die twice. If a second existence on earth were permitted, and a man could name the happiest as well as the most fortunate person he ever knew, whose place he might hold—to be born as he was born, to live as he lived, to suffer and enjoy as he did, and to die as he died, who would accept the boon? It may be doubted whether the most worldly being who ever visited the earth, if he could see his whole bargain, would willingly agree to the undertaking. This present life is rendered worth living only by the continual hope of a better, without which, *cui bono?* would be a fatal question, and would take all energy from our occupations and pleasures. Certainly those who have once reached a state of glory would never consent to live in this world of temptation and sorrow again, or be contentedly degraded to a mere animal life of sensual comfort, or sensual gratification; but for the elevating

accompaniment of knowing that our one short life on earth is the passage to our one eternal life in heaven.

Solemn as our last hour in this world must be to every individual, it is generally more so to the Christian than to those who have reflected less maturely, and realised less clearly the importance of the change. Thus to an enlightened man who approaches the presence of his sovereign, there is a sentiment of awe, which a heedless child, if summoned to accompany him, could scarcely be capable of; and while the thoughtless boy rushes with careless ease into the royal court, he would, perhaps, remark, with a sense of wondering superiority, the agitation and backwardness of his more reverential companion. Every believer should attempt, however, for the comfort of his own soul, and for the immeasurable consolation of surviving friends, to look at futurity with calm resignation and dignified composure.

Some years ago, a dying Christian said to her afflicted friends, attending in sorrow around her bed, "Always associate me with your happiest hours — never think of me in sorrow or gloom. I trust I am going to the full enjoyment of my Saviour's purchased blessings. Remember always how happy we have been."

Life, take thy chance; but oh! for such an end!

CHAP XXV.

DUTY OF LEAVING A FINAL TESTIMONY FOR THE
BENEFIT OF SURVIVORS.

We watch'd her breathing through the night,
Her breathing soft and low,
As in her breast the wave of life
Kept heaving to and fro.

So silently we seem'd to speak,
So slowly moved about,
As we had lent her half our powers,
To eke her living out.

Our very hopes belied our fears,
Our fears our hopes belied —
We thought her dying when she slept,
And sleeping when she died.

For when the morn came dim and sad,
And chill with early showers,
Her quiet eyelids closed — she had
Another morn than ours.

Hood.

MEN who have derided the strictness of a Christian's general habits, and would not attend to admonitions from the living, will listen to the final words of an expiring friend as of one almost returned from the grave. The best and wisest of

mortal men have not as much authority in what they say, as the dying obtain, because their last words bear the stamp of undoubted sincerity, and therefore carry a weight of conviction which no other circumstances could afford.

They breathe the truth who breathe their words in pain.

What a treasury of comfort has been found on such an occasion among weeping relatives in a few last sentences of cheerful and affectionate farewell from a beloved friend before his going to that world where we all wish finally to be assembled! Under ordinary circumstances, those very words might perhaps have been passed over as insignificant; but the lowest whisper of a sick bed has more eloquence than the loudest thunders of oratory.

Words of admonition, after the lips that uttered them are sealed in death, acquire almost the sacredness of inspiration, seeing that the Christian friends who so lately taught us how to live have now shown us how to die; while we, in the anguish of our riven hearts, are ready to exclaim — “Oh! wait thy heav’n, till we have learn’d the way.”

We may and must believe that the dying man is what he seems, for in such circumstances few could wear a mask, and certainly not the Christian, who feels himself already in the very ante-chamber of heaven, and nearly in the visible presence of

his all-seeing God. It was at such a moment of departing life that the excellent Dr. R——, hearing one of his attendants say, "I believe at this instant he enjoys the vision of God," exclaimed, with a dying effort, "Yes!"

A believer speaking thus, with the consciousness that he hovers between both worlds, already seems elevated above the earth, as if he had almost winged his way to heaven. Like the splendid picture of our Lord's transfiguration, the dying man seems mentally raised above this visible scene, while he leaves his last blessing and his parting prayer among survivors.

" Ah! who can stay the soaring might
Of spirits weaned from earthly joys?"

Strange and mournful it is when we listen to the last accents of a voice never more to be heard in this world throughout all its future ages. An eloquent author has beautifully observed, that on the approach of death sometimes "the spirit seems to perforate the shut gates of sense with sudden light, and to gush with lustre to the eye and love and reason to the speech, as if to make it evident that death may be nativity, as if the traveller who had fallen asleep with the fatigues of the way, conscious that he drew near his journey's end, and, warned by the happy note of arrival, looked out, refreshed and eager, through the morning air, for the fields and streams of his new abode."

In the farewell letter of an American clergyman to his sister, dictated on his death-bed, he describes a state of mind which few would not, in such an hour, desire to attain; and certainly faith removes a mountain when it so entirely removes the power of death: "The Celestial City is full in my view — its glories have been upon me — its sounds strike on my ear; its breezes fan me; its odours are wafted to me, and its spirit is breathed into my heart — the Sun of Righteousness now fills the whole hemisphere, pouring forth a flood of glory, in which I seem to float like an insect amidst its beams, exulting, yet almost trembling, while I gaze on this excessive brightness." That clergyman, so faithful unto death, desired that after his decease his congregation should be allowed to visit his remains, and that a label should be laid on his breast, with these words conspicuously inscribed: "Remember the words which I spake unto you while I was yet present with you."

Such were the feelings of a man who through life had always wisely preferred the future to the present, and "lived to pleasure when he lived to God." How contrary was his mind to that of one who disgraced human nature by trying to extinguish in himself and others all belief in futurity; that he and they, like mere animals, might, with unbridled licence, "snatch the pleasures of the present hour!" Voltaire, who libelled all that is

precious to man, had his conscience awakened at last, as if by magic, to a full sense of his folly, and started, from his dream of safety and self-indulgence, to the most agonised apprehension of immediate death.

When suffering tortures of mind and body, worse than those inflicted by the furies of Orestes, he could not bear to be left a moment alone, and was visited by Marmontel, who endeavoured to console him with all the flattery which had once been so successful; but rage and despair succeeded each other in his agitated spirit by turns. Voltaire now became more like a demon than a man. The broad roll of his crimes was distinctly extended before his memory; and at such a time the dying infidel might well have exclaimed to his friends and former associates, in the language of Job, "Miserable comforters are ye all."

The topics of consolation chosen for the support of Voltaire seemed to him but a mockery of his extreme wretchedness, and he lost all patience, when Marmontel, in an encouraging voice, exclaimed, "Think of your laurels! Remember the success of your late tragedy!"

"You talk to me of literary glory!" exclaimed the expiring Atheist in a tone of stern despondency; "but I am dying in frightful torture! Doctor!" added he, earnestly addressing his

medical adviser, "Take half what I am worth but give me six months' life."

"Sir," was the startling reply, "you can live six weeks!"

"Then," answered Voltaire, in an agony of despair, "I shall go to hell—and you shall go with me."

Here art and wit, and learning spread
Their pleasures round the sick man's bed;
With deafen'd ear, with heedless eye,
The silent sufferer turn'd to die.

The awakening to a solemn consciousness of eternity seems, in almost every case, irresistible at the last; and the conviction which at length forced itself on the mind of Dr. Garth during his final hour, was truly awful, being so almost hopelessly late, and so fearfully agitated. Feeling himself bewildered, like a mariner in the midst of a shoreless ocean, without a sail, without an anchor, without a harbour, and without a help, he sent a hurried message to Addison, earnestly begging that he would immediately tell him "whether he believed that the Christian religion is really true!"

A lady of very distinguished rank and fashion when above 70 years old, astonished and shocked a near relative once by asking, confidentially, whether he really did believe the Bible to

true. After convincing her of his own sincere conviction, he prevailed on Lady —— to read it frequently, till she became much interested and occupied with the narrative. Its contents having been hitherto entirely unknown to herself, she always afterwards talked in society as if it were one of the last new publications; and astonished the Bishop of ——, when he was handing her ceremoniously to dinner one day, by observing to him, in her usual conversational tone, “That was a shocking affair, my Lord, about David and Uriah!”

Thus, when “Time has shaken a man by the hand, and Death appears close behind,” the most careless and infidel mind may be suddenly brought to think, though, perhaps, too late, of that one thing needful, which he has, while careful and troubled about many other things, most studiously avoided, or even scornfully ridiculed—a folly, the full evil of committing which it will require eternity to comprehend and to deplore. Lord Rochester arrived, by good fortune, at a timely conviction of this danger. Known as a great wit, a great scholar, a great poet, a great sinner, and a great penitent, he became grieved to the heart, when dying, to remember his past profane life and blasphemous writings; therefore he ordered all his papers to be burned, on which very striking incident Dr. Watts wrote these lines:—

Strephon of noble blood and mind,
For ever shine his name !
As death approach'd, his soul refined,
And gave his looser sonnets to the flame.

" Burn, burn ! " he cried, with sacred rage ;
" Hell is the due of ev'ry page !
Hell be the fate ! But O ! indulgent Heav'n !
So vile the muse, and yet the man forgiven ! "

CHAP. XXVI.

THE NIGHT OF THIS LIFE LEADS TO THE MORNING
OF ANOTHER.

My soul! henceforth in sweetest union join
The two supports of human happiness,
Which some, erroneous, think can never meet,
Some taste of life, and constant thought of death!
The thought of death, sole victor of its dread!
Then leave the racers of the world their own,
Their feather and their froth, for endless toils.
How must a spirit late escaped from earth,
The truth of things now blazing in its eye,
Look back, astonish'd, on the ways of men
Whose lives' whole drift is to forget their graves!

YOUNG.

AN indolent Christian, slumbering in placid self-indulgence, and flattering himself that he is advancing towards heaven, may be led by sudden sickness or grief, to discover that he is actually making no progress in the divine life, but rather deviating on the contrary route, or utterly mistaking the way. Affliction makes him pause to reflect and inquire. It is like stopping to change horses on the road, for a traveller then is sure to

gaze around him, to ask if he is on the right track to measure how far he is from the end, and, perhaps, instead of hastening along the broad road, which he has already pursued only too far, he may be induced to alter his course for a better line.

We need not lament the rapid flight of time, if we be prepared for that better country where time passes away no more; yet in a benumbing world like this, how diligent and unceasing should our watchfulness be! Every hour the expectation must become more hopeless, that those who have continued long unprepared, shall yet overtake the great work of repenting and reforming. The thin partition shall very soon be removed that divides a mortal from immortality, and then the desire to change may come too late; for even in the case of the penitent thief, we must consider that he obeyed the first call to repentance, and so did the labourers hired in the eleventh hour; but we have hardened ourselves against many a summons.

A Christian author mentioned once a little incident, which carries with it a moral so appropriate to these considerations, that, being authentic, it seems worth recording: "I once had a watch which went inveterately ill, but for many a long day I had patience, repaired the workmanship, corrected the handles, and wound it regularly;

but all in vain. At last, my forbearance being exhausted, I went to the watchmaker's, who undertook to break it entirely up next morning, and to send me another. That very night, at a late hour, the old watch, which for several days I had not examined, suddenly began to go! I remember listening while it diligently ticked the moments as they flew. That seemed, indeed, a last effort to redeem its own character; but I looked at the dial-plate, and the handles were entirely wrong! To me it seemed like a solemn warning, that we may too late repent, that we may seek at last to do right, and not be able,—that the sentence beyond recall may be gone out against us, and we may waste efforts in the end, which once might have led us into safety."

If Dives could return back to a new probation on earth, what would he not gladly undergo to fit him for a reprieve from his eternal doom!—Even he, wretched and condemned amidst the torments of eternity, had still one good feeling in the brotherly kindness with which he wished his relatives to be warned against following the course which had brought him to everlasting woe. And it is remarkable to observe, in the dialogue between Abraham and the rich man, though the one was in heaven and the other in hell, yet still the patriarch treated him with courteous language; "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime re-

ceived'st thy good things." How truly, then, ought we not only to love one another with the friendship of this world, but with such Christian affection as should dictate a daily prayer for each other in health, and a parting wish, even in the moment of death, to leave with those who have been kind to us, the benefit of our intercessions and the comfort of our example, in resigning existence with a firm, submissive, and grateful hope of God's mercy!

The taper's flame then upward turns,
While downward to the dust it burns.

A Christian some time since thus exerted himself in his last moment to comfort the afflicted circle around him, by saying these few words,—“My friends! I now find it true, indeed, that he who leaveth all to follow Christ shall have in this world a hundred-fold. I have that hundred-fold peace of conscience with me at parting.”

The act of dying is not invariably accompanied by suffering, for very frequently dissolution causes no bodily pain. Those who die suddenly have always a beautiful expression of peace on their countenances, as well as those whose lives are ended by gun-shot wounds, or by drowning. In any case, the eyes of many will be anxiously fixed on a Christian to ascertain what religion can and will do for him in the hour of extremity,

as well as what he can and will do in bearing it well. If the believer act and speak in no degree differently from those who had their whole treasure in this world, what evidence does he give that a better source of comfort belongs to him? Let the sufferer show those around, therefore, that if he has differed from them in opinions formerly, he still does so in conduct, in temper, in submission, and in those hopes which raise him above present suffering or apprehension. A dying man being lately asked whether he feared death, replied, in a tone of hopeful animation, "What! a Christian afraid to go home!!—no!"

The more impatient men are under affliction, the more need they evidently had of its discipline to produce that cheerful conformity to God's will, and that indifference to this world, so necessary, and so difficult of attainment. When present scenes and interests are rendered distasteful, when former pleasures, like summer friends, have treacherously forsaken, after deceiving us, and the sun itself seems scarcely to shine in our hemisphere of life, then comes religion, like the brother born for adversity, as a benignant comforter, the last, best, only friend for our dreariest hour.

Most of the promises in Scripture are addressed to the afflicted, and God assures his own people that they shall "suffer for his sake," evidently pointing it out as a privilege to do so. In our

earthly attachments, are we not truly delighted when an opportunity occurs to testify by any voluntary sacrifice the almost boundless extent of our affection; and thus in every trial or disappointment we should consider that thereby God is testing us, and, as it were, asking the question, "Lovest thou me?" May all be entitled to answer in the words of St. Peter, "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee!"

Let us try sometimes to imagine how we shall feel in a future state, looking back from the eternal glory of heaven upon "this little morsel of earth," as Monsieur Malherbe called it, "which men have divided into as many kingdoms, or upon this drop of water, portioned into as many seas!" How shall we hereafter smile, perhaps, on observing men so busy about the necessities of a crumbling and decaying body, to which we no sooner give one thing than it asks another, being so disquieted through weakness as to un-wish to-day what we wished for the day before. Let us, then, enter into such salutary thoughts beforehand; let us begin now to view this world as we shall do when we have forsaken it, and let us very solemnly consider that an everlasting futurity depends on the present hour.

Many are rushing on in the journey of life, unheeding that it has any end, scarcely asking where they are going, nor considering what their

object is; and many an entire existence might be described, as a gentleman lately sketched out a day of his own: "I rise, breakfast, read the newspaper, write one or two letters, dine, play at whist, and before I have time to look about me I am in bed again!" In the sanctified lessons of affliction true devotion rises from the ruins of all we once prized beyond our most sacred hopes and elevated duties. If, therefore, we must endure sorrow, either here or hereafter, how much better now! The evil of affliction is only in this world; but the evil of sin would cling to us throughout eternity; therefore the smallest act of deliberate wickedness should be infinitely more appalling in our eyes than the greatest earthly calamity, the sting of which can only last during our short mortal existence.

The roll which was shown to Ezekiel, flying along the heavens, with sorrow, and lamentation, and woe, written on it within and without, must one day cast its shadow on every heart that lives; but in the utmost extremity of grief we may be calmed by reflecting that we are circumstanced as Christ was upon earth, in order that we may hereafter resemble him in the blessedness and perfection of his glory in heaven, and that our sorrows shall soon pass for ever away, though the blessings they are intended to bring shall remain ours when the solid world itself is dissolved.

There has long existed in the Highlands of Scotland a superstition that the dying can take a message from surviving friends to those already in another world. It is a touching and beautiful idea. If the ransomed spirits of the just could also send a message back to living mortals, what would it be? What but an earnest, fervent, entreaty that we should lay aside immediately every weight and the sins which do most easily beset us, and run with patience and perseverance, as they did, the race set before us in the Gospel. A distinguished philosophical author, who died some months ago, gave a solemn promise in writing to an eminent author and poet, that, "if permitted," he will appear to her after his death; but as some time has elapsed without the apparition having come, she begins to despair of that visit, which she had the strange hardihood to desire.

In some instances, immediately before death, the veil which divides our own world from that which is to come, seems partly rent asunder, and some rays of eternal glory to break in like sunset through the bars of a prison. Thus the expiring Christian, hovering between life and death, beholds, as that blessed martyr St. Stephen did, the hitherto invisible world become visible to the eye of his almost disembodied soul, so that his two existences are apparently merged into one. His

vision is no longer limited to the shadows closing around him, but, lighted by the dawn of an eternal morning, his view extends into the real scenes and dazzling glories of eternity.

“The soul’s dark cottage, batter’d and decay’d,
Lies in new light through chinks that Time hath made.”
WALLER.

Among the friends of the late Lady M—— S——, it is often remembered, with deep interest, that, in the very act of expiring, she raised herself up with a look of sudden astonishment and fervent happiness, exclaiming, “I see heaven opened and the angels of God descending!”

A well-known clergyman, at Truro in Cornwall, said earnestly to his attendants, when within a breath of eternity, “Oh, my friend! had I strength to speak, I could tell you such news as would rejoice your very soul. I have had such views of heaven; but I am not able to say more!”

John Knox, likewise, spoke thus at the last, when his life was going out like a spark on the ocean: “I have been in heaven, and have possession. I have tasted of the heavenly joys, where presently I am.” The late Rev. John Holland also said, in similar circumstances, “Speak it when I am gone, and preach it at my funeral, God dealeth familiarly with man. I feel his

mercy. I see his Majesty. Whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell ; God knoweth ; but I see things that are unutterable." We are too apt to set down as false all that is new or strange ; but it seems in these cases as if the removal of the body had been like the withdrawal of the shade from a flame, or the raising of the eye-lid from the eye, which in itself undergoes no change, being merely relieved of that which encumbered and darkened it.

Innumerable instances might be adduced in which the Christian seems, in his last moment of consciousness, to have commenced that note of praise on earth which is to be continued hereafter as the very anthem of Heaven ; but only a few are here recorded of those which are indisputably attested, plainly proving that as night almost insensibly brightens into day, so is it the privilege of some favoured individuals thus gently to fall asleep, with a pleasing, almost dreaming, consciousness of that New World which is near to all, though invisible now. In certain climates of the world, the gales that spring from the land carry a refreshing perfume out to sea, and assure the watchful pilot that he is approaching to a desirable and fruitful coast, when as yet his eyes cannot discern it. Thus it fares with those who have steadily and religiously pursued the course which Heaven pointed out to them. Towards the end

of their days they shall be filled with hope and peace, and joy, which, like those refreshing gales and reviving odours to the seaman, are sent forth from Paradise upon their souls, giving them to understand with confidence that God is indeed bringing them to their desired haven.

Among the many interesting developments of Christian feeling in a last hour, which all might wish to imitate, perhaps none could be more solemnly impressive than what occurred some years ago at the closing scene of a venerable Christian, Sir John Sinclair, known to many as a patriot, in the most exalted sense of that character, and loved by all, as the friend of every one to whom he could show a disinterested kindness. Surrounded by his sorrowing family, he calmly desired, half an hour before he breathed his last, that the curtain should be closed around his bed, so that he should neither see nor be seen. Thus no external object disturbed the awful solitude of his spirit, and then, with a clear, solemn, and deliberate voice, he prayed aloud, until, when his voice gradually ceased, the curtains were opened, and it was found that he had literally prayed himself into eternity. Already he had left a world of prayer for one of praise.

“His watchword at the gates of death,
He enters heaven with prayer.”

MONTGOMERY.

As years advance, it is natural to look back on the long road of events which have constituted life and its realities to us; but many shrink from looking forward to the impending doom of all mortals, and would be apt to say, like old Lady Cork, "I know that death is near, but I do not wish to see him as he advances!"

From our earliest childhood everything is done in this country to increase our terror of death, and the first impression a child receives of the awful event, is derived from the sight of a tall black hearse, with its dark lugubrious forest of nodding feathers. When Lady A—— died in her early youth, she particularly requested not to be carried to the tomb in a feathered hearse, as it had always been the horror of her juvenile imagination.

They manage matters very differently in China, where, as M. Huc mentions, the rich always provide themselves long before death with a coffin to their fancy, and until the time arrives for lying down in it, keep it in the house as a handsome piece of furniture, of which the utility is not immediate, but which cannot fail to be a consoling and agreeable object in an elegantly decorated apartment. To present their parents with an elegant coffin is considered an excellent method for children in a decent rank to show their filial affection. A dying man, before "saluting the

world," as they say in China, is treated by his friends as an agreeable surprise to a handsome coffin, that he may frequently have the satisfaction of casting a glance at his last abode. When the patient is given over, his loving friends never fail to buy him a coffin, and to put it by the side of his bed. Once M. Huc met a procession in which a coffin was borne upon one bier, and a livid emaciated man upon another. He had been taken ill in a neighbouring village, and was being carried home to die. His eyes were fixed immoveably on the coffin, which was the most agreeable spectacle his friends could present to his failing sight.

Nature, then, did not intend death to be so appalling. Monk Lewis, in visiting the tombs of his ancestors among the orange groves of Jamaica, said, "The beauty of the scene quite gives me an appetite for being buried."

We read with awe and consternation how fiercely tortured the Christian martyrs were when they died for the faith of Jesus, and tremble to think how little we could have borne so fearful a test; but it is not so much their bodily fortitude which is to be wondered at, as their persevering belief in the mercy and goodness of God, throughout all their prolonged agonies. Each individual shall be one day stretched on a death-bed of suffering, not the voluntary endurance of pain, but the anguish from which there is no escape. The entrance of a

sinner to the presence of his God, is through a dark valley of humiliation and agony.

In health we have often anticipated this with terror, and at night, when going fatigued to bed, it might be thought that existence would indeed be a pleasant gift if it ended as a day ends, by laying down wearied, but without fear or pain, to sleep with a sure prospect of rising again. The Christian's nightly prayer should be, "Oh God ! prepare me and all dear to me for the future, whatever the future may bring." But may nothing shake my faith in the goodness and mercy of my great Creator.



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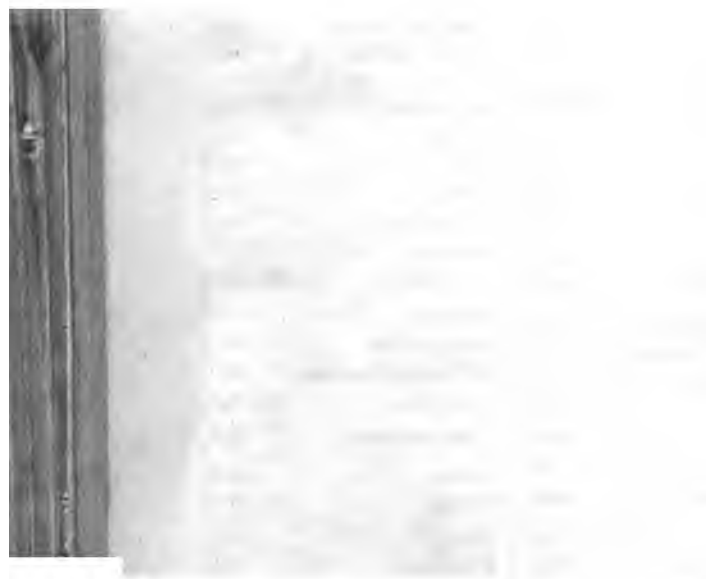
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